





George B. Amberry

Presented by

Henry Boettcher







FIFTY YEARS OF  
AN ACTOR'S LIFE

VOL. II.







*From an original drawing by Moyr Smith.*

W. C. MAUREADY AS IAGO, JOHN COLEMAN AS OTHELLO.

*[Frontispiece, Vol. I.]*

# FIFTY YEARS OF AN ACTOR'S LIFE

BY

JOHN COLEMAN

AUTHOR OF

"CHARLES READE AS I KNEW HIM," "CURLY: AN ACTOR'S STORY," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN PLATES  
CONTAINING 26 PORTRAITS

*IN TWO VOLS.*

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# FIFTY YEARS OF AN ACTOR'S LIFE

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## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE MONTAGUES AND CAPULETS OF THE STAGE*

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THE event of the season was the engagement of Macready, then at his zenith. The giants with whom he had contended in his youth had retired, leaving him "monarch of all he surveyed." Charles Kean certainly had his partisans; Phelps was struggling into fame at Sadler's Wells; Vandenhoff

had a hard fight in the provinces, varied by an occasional visit to town; Forrest was a failure; while Gustavus Brooke had not yet "arrived": hence the last of the giants wielded his sceptre with

Sole sovereign sway and masterful!

Great preparations were made for his reception.

Murray's sister had been the wife of Henry Siddons, and there had ever been feud between Macready and the Kemble faction. *On dit* that, on the eve of a benefit at Covent Garden, a deputation from a certain benevolent society, having already indiscreetly invited Charles Kemble to enact Icilius, when in the act of requesting "Mac's" co-operation as Virginius, incautiously mentioned the prior application to Kemble.

"Gentlemen," replied the irate and eminent one, "I have yet to—er—er—learn that it is—er—er—customary or even—er—er—decent to apply to the—er—er—sergeant to lead the regiment into action while the—er—er—colonel is in—er—er—command! No, thanks! Get your friend to—er—er—enact Virginius, and I wish you—er—er—joy of—er—er—him!"

Fanny Kemble emphasises the existence of the feud in the delightful book in which she mentions that, on returning to the stage to act with "Mac" at the Princess's, where he got £50 *a night* and she (poor lady!) only £15 *a week*, he did not hesitate to say "she was ignorant of the very rudiments of her profession!"

Although a rabid Kembleite, Murray was too politic to assume a hostile attitude to a man who had been a

friend of Walter Scott, and who was still the intimate friend of Lockhart, Jeffrey, Professor Wilson, De Quincey, Tom Moore, Barry Cornwall, Tennyson, Browning, Talfourd, Dickens, Thackeray, and Lytton Bulwer; hence our discreet manager received the idol of the hour with almost regal honours, humbly presenting himself every morning to know if he could assist at rehearsal, and actually providing list slippers for the carpenters, so that the noise of their clumsy boots might not disturb his eminence. Thoroughly imbued with the idea that the conflicting elements of a theatre could only be wielded into a homogeneous whole by a hammer wielded by an intellectual despot, "Mac" did not scruple to smite with a hand of iron, and woe to those who deserved to be smitten!

Those who knew him best were wont to maintain that under his austere exterior lay depths of tenderness and sweetness and a heart of gold, and it is certain that he was a devoted son, an affectionate brother, a model husband and father. He was all these and more *out* of the theatre; but *in* it he was dogmatic, opinionated, impatient of contradiction, domineering, and autocratic, irascible, atrabilarious, and overbearing. Hence even to those grounded in their art he was a constant source of irritation and annoyance, while to the ignorant, the indolent, and incompetent he was not only a torture, but an ever-abiding terror.

An amusing illustration of this occurred during our rehearsal of *Macbeth*. A cockney comedian, whose name wild horses shall not drag from me, had to announce the phenomenon of the "moving grove" in the last

act. This fellow was usually the most cheeky little beggar imaginable, but on this occasion he became a perfect jelly-bag of nerves, and during the first four acts of the play did nothing but anathematise the bard.

"(Blank) Shakespeare, (blank) him!" he growled. "I wish the beast had never been born!"

We were all at the wings waiting to see how our cockney friend would get through. He got on better than could be expected till he came to his last line but one, which he rendered thus, "Within these three miles you may see it *a*-coming."

"No, no, sir!" growled "Mac." "Err—err, '*a*-coming' won't do. Try back!"

Our friend did try back, but still he saw the grove "*a*-coming."

"Good God—no! Err—err—no, no! This is blank verse, and a single misplaced—err—syllable—err—destroys the measure. When you say—err—'*a*-coming,' don't you perceive the *a* is an interpolated, atrociously vulgar sound? Surely you know that—err—'*coming*' begins with—err—err—c, and, therefore, you should say, '*Within these three miles you may see it—err—err—err—coming.*' Don't you see, sir—err—don't you—err—see?"

"No, sir, I don't," replied the mortified messenger. "I only see that I put *one* big *A* before '*coming*,' while you put half a dozen little ones!"

The retort was so apposite that we exploded in every direction, so did "Mac"; but he wore "his rue with a difference"—we exploded with laughter, he with rage!

"Had him there, laddies!" gasped the cockney as he tottered off the stage.

Our facetious friend was not the only martyr to nerves. By this time the scales had fallen from my eyes, and, being thoroughly disillusioned, I was sensible of the unparalleled audacity of my conduct at our first interview; hence I had sense enough to avoid reminding Mr. Macready of that circumstance. He opened in *Hamlet*, in which I was allotted Marcellus. Time and trouble had so altered me that, fortunately, he didn't recognise me. I was changed, too, in other ways. My sublime assurance had changed to the most abject trepidation. I was so paralysed with stage fright that I scarcely knew whether I stood on my head or my heels, and could not articulate a single sentence of the text. He growled and grunted my part as well as his own, and I became so embarrassed that I broke down altogether. Then he said something personally rude. Some proud blood which I inherit enabled me to resent this indignity, and, having once found my tongue, I regained my courage and spoke out boldly, with the result that thenceforth he "let me severely alone."

But let me come to his opening night. Unfortunately Forrest returned to the city to witness his rival's *débüt*. The house was crowded in all parts by an eager and excited audience. Instead of strutting on in solemn procession in the old fashion when the scene drew off, Macready was "discovered" on the stage amidst a tempest of applause. Frankly, there was nothing in his appearance to excite enthusiasm. He wore a dress the waist of which nearly reached to his armpits, and carried a hat

with a sable plume big enough to cover a hearse. He was the only Hamlet whom I ever saw wear gloves, and, being much too large, they were very conspicuous objects. His undershirt, of amber-coloured satin, looked simply dirty—and what with his gaunt, angular figure; his grizzled hair; his blue-black beard, close-shaven to his square jaws, unsoftened by a trace of pigment; his irregular features; his extraordinary nose, unlike anything else in the shape of a nose I have ever seen; and his long, lean neck, he appeared positively grotesque. With the modesty of youth I mentally ejaculated, "What an antiquated guy!" But, after all, "mind is the brightness of the body," and, O ye gods! when he spoke, he made music—brightened, illumined, irradiated the atmosphere, and became transformed into the very beau ideal of the most poetic, subtle, intellectual, dramatic, and truly human Prince of Denmark I have ever seen. But though he lifted you to heaven one moment, he brought you down to earth the next by some weird eccentricity. For example, in the Play Scene he strutted from side to side, waving his handkerchief above his head in the most extravagant manner.

As he uttered the words, "Of the chameleon's dish I eat, the air, promise crammed, you cannot feed capons so!" a mighty hiss arose in front—a hiss like that of a steam engine. At the sound he became livid and absolutely hysterical with rage. Turning to the quarter from whence the sibilation proceeded, he bowed derisively, then staggered back and sank into a chair.

Looking to the upper side boxes on the right, I saw Forrest, the American tragedian. A conspicuous figure at



all times, he was now more conspicuous than ever. At this moment, from the Students' Gallery, which was separated from the upper boxes only by a screen of interfoliated iron-work, a cry arose of, "Turn him out!" I can see him now. The square brow, the majestic head, the dark eyes flashing forth defiance, the pallor of the white face enhanced by his black beard, which contrasted strongly with his turned-down white collar, he looked exactly as he used to look in *The Gladiator* when he said, "Let them come, we are prepared!" The people on the other side of the screen absolutely recoiled, as if they expected some king of the forest to leap from his iron den amongst them. On the stage we were at a standstill; in the auditorium the multitude were awed into silence. After a short pause, I suppose Forrest's better nature prevailed, for he slowly turned away and left the house. Then Macready, like a man possessed, leaped into the breach, apparently inspired by the ordeal through which he had passed. Such a delirium of excitement as was manifest during that Play Scene I have rarely, if ever, witnessed.

Next day the papers were full of this miserable affair, which afterwards became a matter of almost international importance, attended with such disastrous results that I digress for the purpose of relating them. The English and the American tragedians had been on terms of friendly intimacy. Macready had been an old friend of the lady who afterwards unfortunately became Mrs. Forrest, and he was present at their ill-omened marriage. After the scene in Edinburgh, a hollow friendship gave place to open enmity. In his diary Macready says :

"EDINBURGH, *March 2, 1846*.—Acted Hamlet, really with particular care, energy, and discrimination. At the waving of the handkerchief before the play, and 'I must be idle,' a man on the right side of the stage, upper boxes, or gallery, hissed. I waved the more, and bowed derisively and contemptuously. He remained, however, very staunch to his purpose, but the audience stood by me and bore it down. I thought of addressing them, and spoke to Murray about it, but he, very discreetly, dissuaded me. Was called for, and very warmly greeted. Ryder informed me that my insulter was said to be a Mr. W——, who was in company with Mr. Forrest. The man writes in *The Journal*, a paper (depreciating me and eulogising Mr. F——) sent to me from this place."

*The Scotsman* on the following day openly accused Forrest of this outrage, and, a fortnight later, he himself, in a letter to *The Times*, avowed that he had hissed a "fancy dance" which Macready had introduced in *Hamlet*. This insolent avowal evoked universal condemnation from the English press, which, in its turn, provoked reprisals from the other side of the pond, and when two years and a half later Macready returned to the States to fulfil a farewell engagement, this miserable incident had become a burning question.

On his opening in New York, October 4th, 1846, he was assailed with columns of slanderous abuse by the gutter press, and warned off the stage as "a superannuated driveller;" while on his arrival at Philadelphia (Forrest's birthplace), the American tragedian wrote to the local press reiterating that he had certainly hissed Macready

in Edinburgh, but that he himself had been hissed on the London stage at the instigation of his rival. The moment of the publication of these calumnies was one of the most sorrowful of Macready's life, for it took place on the very day, almost the very hour, when the news arrived of the death of his only and dearly beloved brother Major William Neville Macready. Forrest acted, orated, and agitated nightly, while Macready went on the even tenor of his way till he arrived at Cincinnati, where some ruffians flung on the stage at his feet the hide and half the carcase of a dead sheep!

Even this outrage was eclipsed on his return to New York, May 7th, 1848. In his diary of that date he states :

“ When I went on for *Macbeth*, they would not let me speak. They hung out placards, ‘ You have been proved a liar,’ etc. The play proceeded in dumb show. Copper coins were thrown, some of which struck me, and four or five rotten eggs, a great many apples, nearly, if not quite, a peck of potatoes, lemons, pieces of wood, and a bottle of assafœtida, which splashed my dress, smelling, of course, horribly. Volleys of missiles flew without intermission, battering and smashing all before them. The gallery and upper gallery kept up the din within, aided by the crashing of glass and hoarding without. At last a chair was thrown from the gallery on to the stage, another into the orchestra, a third and fourth were hurled by the same man. Finding the struggle hopeless, I retired and left the theatre.

“ *May 9th.* At the requisition of the leading citizens (who assured me that they would attend with

the civic authorities, and put down what was too apparently an organised conspiracy), I consented to appear again on Thursday. My reception was very enthusiastic, but I soon discovered that there was an organised opposition. My first, second, and third scenes passed over unheard; at the end of the fourth the police closed in upon the scoundrels occupying the centre of the parquet, and bundled them out, amid the cheers of the audience. At that moment the bombardment commenced outside. The battering at the outer doors grew louder and louder. Stones crashed through the windows, and one struck the chandelier; whereupon the audience shrank away for protection into the passages. In the fifth act I flung my whole soul into every word I uttered, and carried everything before me, with the result that I was loudly called for and enthusiastically cheered.

“With action emphatically expressive of my grateful appreciation of their sympathy, I quitted the New York stage for ever! Whilst finishing my hasty toilet, we suddenly heard a volley of musketry!

“‘Hark! what’s that?’ I inquired.

“‘The soldiers have fired,’ was the reply.

“‘My God!’ I exclaimed.

“Then came another volley and yet another. Anxious to ensure my safety, my friends now insisted on my borrowing the grey surtout of the gentleman who played Malcolm; Mr. Sefton gave me his cap, and, thus equipped, we crossed the stage, descended into the parquet, and, passing through the central avenue, moved out with the audience into Broadway, where we went

on threading the excited crowd, till we reached my friend Emmett's house, where we were immediately followed by Golden, who came with the terrible news that several men had been shot down and killed.

"'You must leave the city at once!' said he.

"Emmett concurred, and his son Richard was there and then sent to the livery stable to order a carriage and pair of horses to be at the door at four o'clock in the morning. When the clock struck, we waited some ten minutes—an age of suspense—until the vehicle arrived, when we rapidly drove up Fifth Avenue, and were on our way to safety. Thank God!"

Thus for Macready's own narrative. On the following day he reached New Rochelle, proceeding from thence to Boston, where he found a haven of refuge in the home of his friend Mr. George Curtis, and the mayor, Mr. Bigelow, waiting to assure him that the authorities would undertake to protect him from further insult or outrage. For eleven days (from May 11th to May 22nd) the most influential citizens of Boston called to pay their respects and assure him of their sympathy.

Amidst all these cares and anxieties, this remarkable man made notes for a new edition of Pope, communed with his beloved Milton, and, indeed, on May 20th read to his friends (Mr. and Mrs. Curtis, Warthrop, Prescott, and his daughter, Longfellow, Dana, Judge and Mrs. Warner, the Ticknors, etc.) the first and fifth books of *Paradise Lost*, *The Ode to St. Cecilia*, and *Abou Ben Adhem*. On the 23rd, having issued a valedictory manifesto to the American people, and bade farewell to his friends in Boston, he embarked on board

*The Hibernia*, and on June 7th reached London and his beloved ones in safety. Four months later, ten of the Astor Place rioters were indicted at the Court of General Sessions, New York, before Judge Daly and a special jury, and, after a trial of fifteen days, were all convicted. The sentences varied from one month's imprisonment to imprisonment for one year and payment of a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars. Out of evil cometh good, and it is possible that the condign punishment inflicted on the wretched creatures had a salutary influence on the public mind, and may have even led to the result that at this moment the theatrical audience of America is the most tolerant and well bred in the world.

The high estimation in which I hold Edwin Forrest's many generous and noble qualities cannot blind me to his share in this deplorable business. "Great wits to madness sure are near allied," and I am inclined to think that the misfortunes arising from his ill-assorted marriage, combined with his ungovernable temper, had at this particular juncture goaded him to frenzy, and induced him to associate all his misfortunes in some vague, demented way with Macready. There can, however, be no doubt that that one stupid hiss in Edinburgh wrecked a great reputation and caused a deplorable calamity. The crime, however, carried its punishment with it. From that day to the day of his death that erratic genius was ostracised. Although he retained his hold of the *oi polloi* to the last, he remained utterly alienated from the refined and cultured moiety of his fellow citizens. At a period when, having amassed a large fortune, he ought to have retired from public



*Photo by Sarony, New York.*

EDWIN FORREST.





life, he perpetually thrust himself on apathetic and unsympathetic audiences, obtruding his private grievances upon the public ear, until not even his princely benefactions to his brother players could remove the ban he himself had created, and the latter portion of a really distinguished career was embittered by petty squabbles, continued litigation, perpetual airing of dirty linen in public, and finally the brutal assault on N. P. Willis, which excited the indignation of both hemispheres.

And now to return to his rival's engagement in Edinburgh. "His eminence" was awe-inspiring and unapproachable on the stage, but never deigned to enter the "green-room." To his face the rank and file were more than deferential; behind his back they mimicked and indeed burlesqued his mannerisms. As for me, I was, as usual, debarred every opportunity, except in one case of distinction, where I did distinguish myself by becoming highly ridiculous. In *Lear* I had a small part of a few lines. It was my duty to assist in carrying the "eminent one" off the stage when he is supposed to fall asleep in the Heath Scene. At that time it was the fashion to wear gaiter-bottomed trousers. My continuations fitted like my skin, and I was strapped up within an inch of my life. The moment had arrived when I had to lift up the sleeping king. I was in doubt as to whether my precious pantaloons (they were quite new) would stand the strain. While I paused, dubitating as to whether I might venture on the experiment, Lear muttered impatiently, "Err—now then, sir—err—look alive!"

I hesitated no longer, but bent up.

"Each corporal agent to this terrible feat . . ."

When, lo! bang! smash went my unfortunate pants in every direction. Mac, whose eyes were closed, and who was utterly oblivious of my misfortune, growled like a bear with a sore head.

"Err—err—am I to lie here until the middle of next—err—week? Why the—err—err—don't you lift—err—me up?"

"Because I can't, sir!"

"Then why the—err—err—can't you?"

"Because I've burst my bags!" I exclaimed, as I bolted midst peals of laughter, which arose in every direction, even the grave and saturnine "Mac" himself roaring as lustily as the rest.

Disheartening as were these ignoble experiences, I feel grateful now for having been brought so early in contact with this great actor, and for being permitted to assist even in a humble way in his remarkable rehearsals; above all, for seeing him in all his great characters. Besides those already mentioned, he did what I had the audacity to think his very worst part—Othello. To begin with, he made the noble Moor a nigger, black as a chimney-sweep! To counterbalance this, he enacted three of his greatest parts—viz. Werner, Richelieu, and Virginius—all impersonations of unapproachable excellence. In the two former plays I was condemned to servitors and secretaries; in the latter I got a chance. I played Lucius, and acquitted myself so much to his satisfaction that he actually said something civil, and I was the proudest boy in Edinburgh that night.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *THE WORST CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME EVER PRODUCED*

A Roland for an Oliver—Webster and Celeste—*Green Bushes*—*Woman Hater* and Napoleon—The Vandenhoffs—Second Edition of *Antigone*—Burlesque thereof—Enter John Braham—The “Mad Sailor,” Charles Reade—*La Grande* Charlotte and Sister Sue as Romeo and Juliet—“Charley de Boots,” *Rob Roy*, and the Bailie—Sir Walter’s Avowal of the Authorship of *Waverley*—*The Cricket on the Hearth* and *Time Works Wonders*—My First Failure—Punching the Prompter’s Head—Breaking the Spell—I sleep a Whole Week *sans intermittence*—Last Night of the Season—Dominique the Deserter—I desert also, and depart for Dundee.

OF course, the season would not have been complete without a pantomime at Christmas. Candour constrains me to say our pantomime was about the worst I have ever seen, and I have seen many bad ones. Nothing was done for it, certainly not more than a ten-pound note was expended in preparations. The “opening” was acted by all our principal comedians in “dumb show,” save that Miss St. George sang a song. I forget what it was about, but I remember that it was nightly encored. The Ballerina was conspicuous by its absence, but the Harlequin and Columbine were our stock dancers, while the Clown and Pantaloon were specially imported from town for the occasion. These renowned pantomimists were about as funny as a funeral. Evidently,

however, our classic audience were not of my opinion, for they roared at their old-fashioned horseplay, which even then appeared to be on its last legs, but still survives, and, indeed, flourishes in vigorous imbecility during the annual feast of folly. We youngsters were all called upon to assist in the Harlequinade: George Honey was a starved servant, Melrose a fat boy, Parselle a Highlander (as he was wont to appear outside a snuff shop), Joe Reynolds a policeman, and I—save the mark!—was the swell. We were all bonneted, and knocked about from pillar to post by the Clown—a great fat, funereal cockney Grimaldi. I got more than any one of this rough-and-tumble treatment, and the more I resented it, the more the ruffian enjoyed it. A hideous mask which I wore made it somewhat difficult to dodge his polite attentions, which during the “rally” culminated in his knocking me into a barrow, which George Honey had to trundle off. Upon my remonstrating with this pugnacious pantomimist, and requesting him to “be less rough,” he merely responded with insolent derision; whereupon I resolved to repay him in his own coin. On the last night I took Honey into my confidence, and we arranged the programme between us. At the *finale* of the “rally,” instead of my being bundled into the barrow by Mr. “Joey,” I knocked him into it, head over heels, and George trundled him off amidst yells of derision, while I slipped on my great-coat and was out of the theatre like a flash of lightning!

The boys told me that the infuriated “Joey” sought me all over the theatre, clamouring for my “gore”;

but I suppose, on reflection, he thought better of it : anyhow, he disappeared, and I have never seen or heard of him since. Murray did not know of this escapade till long after its occurrence, or doubtless I should have had marching orders there and then. Glover told me that when he told Murray the story afterwards, the grim old disciplinarian relaxed into a roar.

The pantomime was followed by Webster and Celeste, who appeared in *The Green Bushes* with dubious results. He was indiscreet enough to attempt Grinnridge after Lloyd, and the pit would not have him at any price. The original Miami in Edinburgh was a young, beautiful, and sympathetic actress, and the Edinburghians received even Celeste but coldly. Everything went wrong on the opening night : her gun missed fire ; when she fell, a lace burst ; an indispensable but indescribable undergarment gave way ; she had no time to rearrange it ; tore it—or, to be precise, them—off in a temper, prior to leaping into the Mississippi, from whence I, being a certain Captain D'Artois, had to rescue her. In doing so, to my horror, I found she was in the condition graphically described by Hans Breitman in three memorable words ; but she was a good sort, and, as it was not my fault, she graciously forgave me. Webster's failure in Grinnridge was amply atoned for by his delightful *Woman Hater* and his impersonation of Napoleon in *The Pretty Girls of Stilberg*. Both he and Celeste won all hearts by their urbanity, and we were sorry to lose them.

That scene built for Antigone induced our astute chief to offer an engagement to the Vandenhoffs, who,

ignorant of the fact that La Belle Hélène had already taken the gilt off the gingerbread, jumped with alacrity at the proposal. When Mr. Vandenhoff discovered on his arrival that the play had been already done, he was highly indignant, and, having told Murray publicly what he thought about his conduct in the matter, never deigned to speak to him again.

Although his family hailed from Salisbury, Vandenhoff (as the name indicates) was of Flemish origin. Originally intended for the Catholic priesthood, he was educated at Stonyhurst College, from whence he decamped to become an actor. He was rather grandiose in manner, and occasionally gave himself classical airs—that is, *in* the theatre; *out* of it he was a *bon vivant* and *bon camarade*.

He was such a martyr to nasal catarrh that he always found it absolutely necessary to clear his bronchial tubes at the wings before he came on; and it was by no means unusual for him at the commencement of the oration in Brutus, or, at the height of an impassioned scene in *Coriolanus*, to have recourse to his pocket handkerchief, a process which invariably evoked a sound such as is now emitted by the danger-signal of a motor-car. Upon the night of his *débüt* in his native city as Earl Osmond (*Castle Spectre*), his brother and a large circle of friends assembled to do honour to the occasion. At the critical moment preceding his entrance, Osmond was heard "clearing the scuppers" at the wings, and there arose, amidst a hush of breathless expectation, a "rootitah" like the blast of a fog-horn. At that well-known sound the

brother exclaimed, "The earl! I know his trumpet," and on stalked the stately tragedian amidst a Gargantuan roar of laughter which might have been heard on Salisbury Plain!

Apart from this unfortunate infirmity, Vandenhoff was not only an accomplished, but a versatile actor, as I had occasion to learn hereafter. For many years he was the popular idol of Liverpool and Manchester, when the verdict of those great towns was considered equal to that of Edinburgh and Bath, and second only to the Londoners. His acting, avowedly modelled on the Kemble School, had more robustness and virility than his masters. Though scholastic, unfortunately he was rarely or ever sympathetic, and, with all his vast experience, he had not succeeded in the art of concealing his art. Notwithstanding his accomplishments and his personal advantages, Mr. John Foster had the mendacious effrontery to affirm, when Vandenhoff made his first appearance (at the Haymarket in *Coriolanus*, his best part), that he had neither voice, face, figure, nor one single requisite, natural or acquired, for the character he had the temerity to attempt; whereas "his voice was like a clarion," his face was cast in the most perfect classic mould, and his figure was a model of manly beauty. This anecdote I had from Mr. Vandenhoff's own lips. His Creon was a performance of such unapproachable excellence that, when my poor friend Glover saw it (excellent actor that he was), he said, "Let me go and hide my diminished head!" Miss Vandenhoff's Antigone was almost as admirable as her father's Creon; but, alas! first impressions go a

long way, and some of our sapient critics maintained that she was but a poor imitation of the Divine Helen.

The engagement was a financial failure. Vandenhoff thought he and his daughter had been cruelly used in the matter, and took his departure, exclaiming, in dudgeon :

Despising,  
For you the city, thus I turn my back ;  
There is a world elsewhere !

Determined to make the most of that unfortunate Greek Scene, Murray next engaged Henry Hall to play Creon in the burlesque which he (Hall) had acted at the Strand in conjunction with the Antigone of George Wild, one of the most popular comedians of the period. The author of this trifle (my old friend Edward Laman Blanchard) assured me that it was written, the music arranged, and the piece admirably produced in forty-eight hours ! In Edinburgh, Hall did not attempt to burlesque Vandenhoff, but gave a splendid imitation of Dan O'Connell. Lloyd (as far as that loathsome thing, a man in petticoats, can be entertaining) seemed to hit the popular taste in Antigone, while in Hæmon Miss Julia St. George astonished and delighted everybody by a remarkable imitation of Miss Faucit.

This engagement was followed by the appearance of the world-renowned veteran vocalist John Braham. As a child I had previously heard him, in conjunction with his two sons, sing at a concert in my native place. Methinks, after all these years, I can hear them now, in



“Good-night, all’s well!” and “Ah! vadasi via di qua!” but, above all, in “The Death of Nelson!”

Let me try to describe him as he appeared in Edinburgh as Count Bellino in *The Devil’s Bridge*. Try to imagine a little, funny-looking, wiggy, long-bodied, short-legged Jewish old gentleman in russet boots, drab pantaloons, Romaldi doublet jacket, and Richard III. hat, with a cluster of black feathers, like one of those sable plumes we are accustomed to see over a hearse at a funeral.

His acting was not impressive, but when he sang—

And there stands the murderous wretch;

But start not—start not—

’Tis but fancy’s sketch!—

he lifted me off my feet, and in the Echo Duet in *Guy Mannering*, when he entered upon the words, “I am here—I am here!” I thought he would have lifted the roof off the building! In this very play, however, he did one of the most absurd things ever witnessed. In the last scene (the cave in which Meg Merrilies confronts and confounds Dirk Hatterick and Gilbert Glossin) a grand piano was discovered, at sight whereof Braham blandly remarked, “A piano! that reminds me of the delightful aria I heard at La Scala the other night. Let me see if I remember it.”

Sitting down, he accompanied himself in a delightful Italian ditty; then, an encore being vociferously demanded, he responded with “Waft her, Angels.”

As Tom Tug he looked just the figure for a weatherbeaten old mariner. His “Jolly Young Waterman” was bright and vivacious, and “Farewell, my

Trim-Built Wherry," moved me to tears ; but when he saw the sail in "The Bay of Biscay," I saw it, too ! At that time this remarkable man must have been considerably more than threescore and ten ; yet years after that I heard him at Exeter Hall, warbling with undiminished vigour.

To fill up a week now and then, Mr. Murray had some minor attractions : an amateur actor, one, Mr. Mills (a sporting novelist, I think), came and attempted one or two of the standard comedy parts, Young Rapid, Goldfinch, and the like, with dubious success. A tall, stately, slender, fair-haired woman—approaching the meridian of life, but still of rare beauty and distinction of manner, and with remarkable taste in dress—played Lady Townley for a night or two. No one knew who she was, or whence she came, unless it were Murray himself, and, if so, he kept her secret well. An element of mystery and (from her sad eyes and distraught manner) of misfortune seemed to surround her with a kind of weird halo. We wove all kinds of romances about her. For my part, I formed the opinion that she had been an actress who had married a peer of the realm, that her marriage had turned out unhappily, that she had harked back to the happy hunting-grounds of Bohemia, hoping to renew the triumphs of her youth, and found them not. She was a charming and accomplished creature, evidently a gentlewoman ; but, alas ! the glory had departed, and so she vanished into the mist like some pale golden-haired ghost, and was heard of no more.

As the season advanced towards the summer, occasionally

about, or tucked up her petticoats, before she "polished off" Tybalt or gave the *coup de grâce* to Count Paris, or when she took "the measure of an unmade grave" at rehearsal. Now-a-days, what with their cigarettes, their horsey manners, their "bikes," their bowler hats, starched shirt fronts, men's collars and cravats, their divided skirts and knickerbockers, one can scarcely tell a boy from a girl; but we had not arrived at this state of affairs when I was a lad: hence these masculine proclivities shocked the spinsters of the company, and provoked satirical comment amongst masculine admirers or detractors, who incontinently dubbed the new Romeo "Charley de Boots." The desire evinced by *la grande* Charlotte to disport herself in masculine attire led to speculations which it would be indecorous to repeat here. My own impression is that she desired to show that, although nature had denied her beauty of feature, it had endowed her with exceptional beauty of form. She had an ample and majestic bust, the waist of a woman, not of a wasp, and, if a Ruskin had exception to her centre of gravity, as being just a shade too exuberant, he would certainly have declared that from that point downwards she was a model for a sculptor. As a rule, actresses of refinement and sensibility, when they assume male attire, betray their female origin by quaint little movements, the lower limbs are apt to cling helplessly together, the knees are instinctively bowed inward, while numerous other quaint and pretty *minauderies* suggest the existence, and, indeed, the very essence of feminine charm. Not a shadow of these dubieties were

observable in our new Romeo. Her demeanour was distinctly masculine ; her limbs straight and, if I may use the term, strident as those of a youth ; her figure, except in the central region before indicated, might have been that of a robust man ; while her amorous endearments were of so erotic a character that no man would have dared to indulge in them *coram publico*.

The British public has strange prejudices on the subject of art ; it will not tolerate an Englishman for Romeo, if he is no longer young ; but it will accept a mature, adipose, and epicene creature, an obese and elderly Italian (I allude to Rossi, who was, notwithstanding his age and adiposity, an admirable Romeo) ; and it jumps at a bearded, stalwart giant like Jean de Reske in Gounod's Opera. Curiosity and Miss Cushman's fine form attracted attention to her Romeo, but it was by no means the abnormal performance described by Mr. Sheridan Knowles and other indiscreet adulators ; it was simply the effort of a monstrously clever woman—but it was not Romeo. Certain passages were powerful and passionate—notably the death of Tybalt, a dexterous and splendid *coup de théâtre*. Then her Banishment Scene “struck fiery off indeed” through the feebleness of her sister's attempt in the previous scene. This lady's Juliet was about as puerile an effort as I have ever seen. Its most conspicuous feature was its costume and its corsetage, both of which were notably mediæval and appropriate, and at a time when shoulder-of-mutton sleeves, *décolleté* necks, short waists, and huge bunchy petticoats were *à la mode*, singularly novel, and becoming.

The fair Susan attempted two or three other parts with dubious success—notably the Youthful Queen and the Duchess de Torrenoeva in Planché's charming little comedy, *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady*. Although she could not act, nature had plenteously endowed her with beauty, and, what is better, amiability ; hence we were all glad to learn that soon after this engagement she made a fortunate marriage and retired from a calling for which she had no vocation.

Nearly every week brought some distinguished "star" or other, and during our brief interregnums we fell back on stock pieces or occasionally got up a new one. *Rob Roy*, so unaccountably delayed in its first production in Edinburgh, had become, when I first saw it there, a perennial attraction, and indeed so it remains to this day. Although on its original production at Covent Garden (March 12th, 1818), with Macready as the Cateran, Liston the Bailie, Tokely as Dougal, Kitty Stephens (afterwards Countess of Essex) as Di Vernon, and Mrs. Egerton as Helen Macgregor, it took London by storm, more than thirteen months elapsed before it found its way to the modern Athens. The minor managers were, however, not so laggard. Within a few weeks of its production in town, it was acted to overflowing houses in all the smaller towns of Scotland by a certain Mr. Mullender and his company ; while Mr. Ryder (a famous Scottish actor manager) made both fame and money as the bold outlaw in Dundee and Aberdeen before it occurred to Murray to do the play. On its production in the

Granite City, Mackay had distinguished himself so highly in the Bailie that the news reached Edinburgh, and the astute Murray deemed it imperative to secure the Aberdonian comedian, who became the *protégé* and friend of the author, and the idol of Auld Reekie.

Save the masterpieces of Shakespeare, *The School for Scandal*, and *East Lynne*, *Rob Roy* has been more frequently acted than any play in the English language. Scarcely a year elapses without its being revived in Edinburgh or Glasgow, each time more splendidly than before ; yet, so infamous were the copyright laws of a century ago, that neither author, adapter, nor composer ever received one red cent of honorarium, while managers were absolutely coining money out of the brains of the men whom they had robbed.

*Apropos*, from some occult reason, now more difficult to understand than ever, up to 1827 Sir Walter persistently repudiated the authorship of *The Waverley Novels*. In writing Mrs. Hughes (grandmother of the author of *Tom Brown's School Days*), Scott categorically affirms, "I really assure you that *I am not the author* of the novels which the world ascribes to me so pertinaciously. If I were, what good reason should I have for concealment, being such a hackney scribbler as I am?" That letter, only recently published in *The Century Magazine*, was written in 1823, yet four years later (February 23rd, 1827), at the dinner of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund, in proposing the health of Mackay, Scott cast aside the mask in these memorable words, "I would fain dedicate a bumper to the health

of one who has represented several of the characters (of which I had endeavoured to give the skeleton) with a truth, a liveliness, for which I may well feel grateful. I beg leave to propose the health of my friend Bailie Nicol Jarvie, and I am sure that when *the Author of Waverley and Rob Roy* drinks to Nicol Jarvie, it will be received with the just applause to which that gentleman has always been accustomed !”

In relating this incident, Mackay said to me, “And it was received, my boy, with more, ten times more, than the applause to which I had been accustomed, and that was actually the proudest moment of my life ! Wae’s me to think that so soon after we lost him !—barely five years, but years of happiness and of honour for me, gladdened by the sunshine of his een and the music of his voice !”

Save that poor dear Miss Cleaver made a most lamb-like creature of that spitfire Helen, *Rob Roy* was most admirably done. It is true that the scenery (painted for the visit of George IV. ages ago) was getting rather dingy, but it was eminently characteristic. On these occasions Mackay emerged from his retirement for the Bailie, a great feature, but not the only feature, of the performance, for the hapless Melrose, who had just emerged from the “utility” crowd, snatched “a grace beyond the reach of art” in the Dougal creature. Eburne and Miss St. George were highly efficient in Francis and Diana, Wyndham made a spirited Rashleigh, and Glover a picturesque and admirable Rob Roy, while Murray’s Major Galbraith and Lloyd’s Macstuart made their one short scene

one of the striking features of the play. The same remark applies to Miss Tellett's Mattie and Miss Nicoll's Jean McAlpine. The music, too, was capitably done—altogether an admirable and splendid performance.

Dickens was then at the height of his celebrity, and *The Cricket on the Hearth* was not only one of our most charming productions, but one of the most perfectly acted plays I have ever seen. In addition to Murray's matchless Caleb Plummer, Glover was the John Peerybingle; Ray, Gruff and Tackleton; Lloyd, Tilly Slowboy; the Stranger, Wyndham; Clara Tellett (then an exquisite little creature) was Dot; Mrs. Leigh Murray, Bertha, the Blind Girl; Miss Nicoll, the old lady; Miss Macfarlane, her daughter; and Miss Julia St. George, the Cricket on the Hearth. These names avouch the excellence of the cast and the admirable and finished art of the performance.

Amongst many standard works, I retain the most vivid recollection of Douglas Jerrold's comedy *Time Works Wonders*, which I had already seen at the Haymarket, but which I thought much better done in Edinburgh. Murray's Old Goldthumb I thought far away in advance of Farren; Wyndham's Young Goldthumb was more manly and infinitely handsomer than Charles Mathews, while Miss Nicoll and Miss Tellett invested their parts with a charm entirely their own. It was a painful pleasure to me to witness these delightful performances. I might look, but I must not touch; and, while I looked, I suffered the tortures of Tantalus.

Every Tuesday morning at ten o'clock found me devouring the cast board, which always told the same



tale for me—message-bearing flunkeys or speechless nobles. One Tuesday at last came a break. I found myself announced for Howe's part in Peake's comedy *The Sheriff of the County*. Although a very bad part, still, it was a part ; I forget now what it was about—I only remember I was a soldier, and had to come on in the second act and speak a soliloquy. I was off like a shot to the wardrobe to arrange about my costume. The only military equipage they had belonged to the year one, and I meant to be up-to-date. To this end I bribed the assistant to accompany me to the castle, found out the regimental tailor, and induced him to let me have a suit that fitted like my skin, for a few shillings.

The eventful night arrived. I swagger on with a cigar in my mouth from the L. V. E., take the stage elate and confident, and, for the first time in Edinburgh, get a reception. This unexpected compliment knocks me off my balance ; I swallow a mouthful of smoke, am seized with a paroxysm of sneezing and barking ; audience respond and sneeze and bark back. The more I endeavour to restrain myself, the worse it becomes. The prompter flings me the "word," hammers it at me. I gasp and gasp, but deuce a word can I articulate. Evidently the audience take my agonies for comic business, for they yell ; and while they yelled, I agonised.

Charles Reade, who witnessed this scene, told me years after that it was the most ludicrous he ever beheld. At length, above their yells, arises the voice of the prompter, "Come off, idiot, come off !" I do come off ; am bullied and insulted ; my Irish blood

takes fire, and I incontinently punch the prompter's head! That was a costly punch; it cost me a week's salary and was near costing me my engagement. After this no more military swells; back I was sent to flunkeys, speechless nobles, and perpetual degradation.

Thoroughly disheartened, I began to think there was a conspiracy against me. It was in vain that I tried to forget my trouble in hard work. I studied the great Shakespearian parts; shed ink by the gallon; kept a diary (would I had it now!); wrote reams of verse (wretched doggrel!), numerous bad plays, and more numerous worse stories. Nothing I could do satisfied me. I had become of Hamlet's mood, "Man delighted not me, no, sir, no—nor woman either." At last I couldn't write, couldn't study—worse still, I could not sleep. Many and many a time through the long weary nights have I lain tossing and tumbling on my sleepless pillow, until I rushed out to Arthur's Seat, walked for hours till the day-god leaped forth from the sea. This loneliness and misery became unendurable. After all, why should I cumber the earth? I had no one to live for. A good sound sleep, and then—but "In that sleep of death what dreams may come?" Bah! after all, sleep is sleep, and sleep without dreams must be pleasant and sufficing. My insomnia grew worse and worse. I had suffered from this thrice-cursed malady for several weeks, when, one morning moodily strolling into the Museum in Princes Street, I brushed against an old school-fellow who had just left Sandhurst and was on his way to Fort George to join the regiment to which

he had been gazetted. He scarce knew me I was so changed. No wonder! I scarce knew myself. We stopped opposite one of the new, fashionable shops, the window of which consisted of a huge sheet of plate glass, and, pointing to the reflection of a cadaverous-looking individual, whose back stooped, whose head drooped forward like that of an old man, my friend inquired, "Who's that?"

"Myself," I replied with a shudder.

"Heads up," said he,—“heads up, I tell you!” With that he gave me a slap on the back which nearly took the breath out of my body. “Take my arm—chest forward—back thrown in. Now, left foot foremost—march!”

As we walked towards the castle, he drew me out, and I told him my story. Getting it off my mind, combined with his sympathy, did me a power of good. By the time we had reached Mons Meg, I was better; by the time I had had a glass of wine I was better still. We stayed to dine at mess with Jack's friends in garrison; there was a jovial time, wine and song, laughter and good fellowship, then oblivion! It was Saturday mid-day when I met my friend—it was Monday afternoon at six o'clock when I awoke in my own diggings and rang the bell for a cup of tea. I could scarcely keep my eyes open while I swallowed it; the moment after, I was again asleep sound as a rock. Unfortunately, that night I had one of the few opportunities which presented itself for playing a decent part, *viz.* George Heriot in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. My landlady was thoughtful enough to call in

a doctor, who took stock of the situation and kindly called on Mr. Murray to inform him of the state of affairs. I slept the whole of that week almost without intermission, and from that time forth my health and spirits revived.

By this time I had struck up a friendship with Edmund Glover, who, sympathising with my aspirations, and realising that it would be mere waste of time to tarry for another season in Edinburgh, procured me an engagement to play the light comedy at Dundee. Hence, when the notice went up for the termination of the winter season and the commencement of the summer one at the Adelphi (which was also under Murray's management), I did not write in for a re-engagement, which I have reason to believe gave great offence at headquarters.

The last night was for the benefit of Mr. Mackenzie, the leader of the orchestra. To do honour to the occasion, "the chief" appeared in one of his most famous parts, Dominique the Deserter. There is a particular situation in this play in which the hero is seized by a number of lackeys, hoisted upon their shoulders, and, while struggling for freedom, is carried off the stage. This scene had been carefully rehearsed so that every one of Dominique's funny lines might strike fire. Unfortunately, to commemorate the termination of the season, there had been a dinner and jollification, with copious libations, at Frater's restaurant opposite the stage door—so at least I was told, for I was not present. The "boys" were mellow, "Nae fou, but jest a wee drop in their een," and had forgotten all

about the business; hence Dominique was dragged off struggling and fighting before the proper time, and three or four of his best lines were cut out. Conscious of their wrongdoing, the other fellows, the moment they reached the wings, turned and bolted, while I, unfortunately, remained, and was made the scapegoat. Wild at being slaughtered in his pet part, Murray continued to hit out right and left, exclaiming, "I am glad I did not knock your stupid head off!"

The knowledge of my innocence and the sense of my wrongs got the better of me, and I retorted savagely, "You may be glad! For if you'd laid a hand on me, I'd have broken every bone in your body, you old humbug!"

"What—what! Puppy, you dare!" he gasped.

Fortunately, at this moment the stage manager intervened with, "Stage waiting, sir!"

"Wait—wait till I come off!" roared the irate Murray, as he rushed on the stage.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### DUNDEE

A Youthful Romeo and a Mature Juliet—A Heavy Light Comedian—*Labore est honore*—Burying Douglas beneath the Grampian Hills—Tom Powrie—Julia St. George and *The Slave*—An Idiotic Affair of Honour—"Come! open your gates and let me gang free, For I darena stay longer in Bonny Dundee!"—The Kingdom of Fife—Back in Auld Reekie—Final Interview with the Autocrat of the North—Retirement of Murray—His Successors, Wyndham, Lloyd, and Leslie—"Sanctuary"—Foundation of a Fortune—Retirement of Alexander—A Parthian Dart—David Prince Miller, and the Wizard of the North—The Fire King—Glover becomes "Monarch of all he surveys" in Glasgow—Lloyd Loquitur—Murray's Final Exit.

MY engagement in Dundee had little of note to claim a place in my memory, save that marmalade and jute were the staple industries and the town was scarce half the size it is now. There were, however, two theatres, the Theatre Royal and ours, which was called the Yeaman Shore Theatre. The Royal was closed; and ours, a little low-priced building, was crowded nightly by the operatives from the mills. I was to have opened in *Mercutio*; but to my astonishment and, I may add, to my delight, found myself announced for Romeo to the Juliet of Mrs. Pollock, who, though somewhat too mature for Capulet's fair daughter, was still an admirable and accomplished actress.

It was now that I congratulated myself on following *la grande* Charlotte's advice. I had never acted young

Montague, but was letter perfect in the text, thoroughly *au fait* in the business, and my sword-play was a veritable "feather in the cap of youth." I had my own dress, too. When I got on the stage, I was astonished to find the pit packed like herrings in a barrel with the factory girls, no single male creature being permitted to invade that sacred territory—a state of things I found obtaining in Nottingham fifteen years later. I had been announced with a flourish of drums and trumpets as (save the mark!) "The Celebrated Juvenile Tragedian from the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh!"

I think I must have been more successful than I deserved. At any rate, the Dundee people were very kind to me, and I became a great favourite. My manager, Mr. Langley, was a stout man of middle age, who looked more like a prosperous tradesman than an actor. He was a capital heavy light comedian. Prior to my advent, he had played most of the leading business; but he liked to take things easy, was fond of his pipe and his pot and a good dinner: so he handed over to me Hamlet, Othello, Richard, Matthew Aylmer, Gambia, and other parts of a similar character. Then it was that I realised for the first time how much I was indebted to that period of probation in Edinburgh. It had afforded me ample opportunity for acquiring a knowledge of the fundamental principles of my art—an opportunity unrivalled then and altogether unattainable now. It had also afforded me leisure for the study of the great masters, and the actual business of the scene from all the great actors of the age. It was an artistic education merely to see these illustrious people in their great parts,



but to be brought daily and hourly in contact with them was an inestimable advantage. I was exceptionally fortunate in this respect, inasmuch as my acquaintance with these distinguished artists in many cases ripened ultimately to friendship. Nor was this all: many of these "choice and master spirits" deigned to advise and instruct me, and, being a docile pupil, I benefited by their instructions.

The Dundee Company was small, but competent, and, as every one understood his or her business, the pieces were all very creditably done. Our leading lady, born a Fraser, had become the wife of Ryder, the Great Northern manager, and, upon his death, tempted matrimony a second time and became Mrs. Pollock. Some years previous she had *débüté* at Covent Garden with Mr. Panmier (see *ante*) in *Venice Preserved*, but, having failed to obtain a permanent footing in London, had returned to "The Land of the Leal." It was unfortunate for both of us that I was too young for her and she was too old for me, especially when I had to enact her father, Matthew Aylmer, in *Love's Sacrifice*, and Master Walter in *The Hunchback*. We got on much better in *Douglas*, for I was just about the age for Young Norval, while she was Lady Randolph herself.

*Apropos* of this play, my friend Wilson Barrett told me that when he was her light comedian at Aberdeen, a certain distinguished metropolitan performer from the minors was cast for the part of Norval. This gentleman had never met Douglas before, and he so mangled and murdered the hapless youth that the play tumbled to pieces, and the curtain

fell amidst yells of derision. Before the enraged manageress could vent her spleen, the peccant tragedian bolted with the prompt-book, which he had secreted just before commencing his last scene.

Next day he was late at rehearsal, and, when he came on the stage, Mrs. Pollock opened fire.

"So, sir, we've been waiting for you for the past hour!"

"I've been out of town, madam."

"Out of town, sir? Psha! what have you done with the prompt-book of Douglas?"

"Buried it!"

"Buried it!" echoed Lady Randolph.

"Yes, madam, I've buried your (adjective, noun, substantive) Norval under his (adjective) Grampian Hills, and I hope to God he'll never come to life again!"

Needless to say, that was the last appearance in the Granite City of that distinguished metropolitan performer.

Tom Powrie, afterwards a well-known tragedian in Glasgow and Edinburgh, was a native of Dundee, and frequently acted with us *en amateur*. Rashleigh Osbaldiston was then his favourite part, but Rob Roy subsequently became his *cheval de bataille*, and it was the ambition of his life to play the gallant Cateran in town. Years later, Chatterton afforded him an opening at Drury Lane, where *Rob Roy* was got up with great splendour. Unfortunately for poor Tom, on his very first appearance he met with an unlucky accident, sprained his ankle, and opened and shut the same night.

At the end of Mrs. Pollock's engagement, Miss Julia St. George, then in the flower of youthful beauty, joined us for a short time, during which I got into trouble on her account. Having been on terms of friendly intimacy in Edinburgh, and being the only member of the Dundee Company with whom she was acquainted, I devoted myself to her service, escorting her to and from the theatre, accompanying her in her walks, etc. Her youth and beauty, combined with her accomplishments as a vocalist, attracted much admiration, especially from the military quartered in the town. One youngster was especially pressing in his attentions, sending her fruit and flowers, inditing effusive billets, etc. To his mortification, fruit, flowers, and billets were all returned, and, as I was seen continually in her company, the irate son of Mars conceived the idea of making me responsible for her insensibility to his advances. For her benefit, on the last night of her engagement, she played Zelinda in *The Slave*, and I enacted, for the first time, Macready's part of Gambia. On this occasion the fair Julia's adorer had been dining and wining "not wisely but too well," and resolved to "go" for me. He made his way behind the scenes with a cigar in his mouth. By accident or design he had selected the most critical moment in the play for his purpose. Alarums were sounded. A battle was supposed to be raging; Colonel Clifton (my successful rival) was stricken down in peril of his life! In a gush of grandiloquent magnanimity I went forth to rescue him. It was this moment of supreme exaltation which Ensign A—— indiscreetly selected

for the purpose of insulting me. As I rushed off, sword in hand, he confronted me at the head of the stairs which led beneath the stage, and puffed the fumes of a full-flavoured Havana right in my face. My Celtic blood took fire at this outrage. Fortunately I did not use the sword in my right hand, but instinctively struck out with my left and knocked the invader from the top of the stairs to the bottom; then, snatching up my prostrate rival (Clifton), I cast him over my shoulder, returned to the stage, and consigned him to life and love in Zelinda's arms, while the curtain descended upon the tableau amidst "thunders of applause."

When the act was over, I found my friend the enemy lying unconscious under the stage. Fearing I had killed him, I picked him up, and carried him to my room—or rather to the manager's, whose friend, Dr. Kernahan, happened to be in the boxes. Fortunately there was no concussion and no bones broken; but the nose was a little out of drawing, and unfortunately the right eye was in mourning.

The doctor was, however, kind enough to take the poor lad home to headquarters, and I thought the incident was closed. But a week later my gentleman waited for me, coming out with a friend and a horse-whip. Luckily Tom Powrie was with me, and though my adversary provided the whip, 'twas not I who got the horse-whipping.

After this I concluded the matter was settled.

But it wasn't. Next day two friends of Mr. A—— waited on me to demand satisfaction. It was absurd

then, and appears worse than absurd now, that two stupid boys should not only have been permitted, but actually aided and abetted, by older men in making fools of themselves. Apart from its being out of date, it was illegal and had become punishable by law, after the affair of Tuckett and Munro. But we were both hot-headed idiots, and were, or fancied we were, both madly in love with the charming young lady, who had actually left Dundee utterly oblivious of the folly which is recorded here for the first time. We met on the sands early one morning, and exchanged shots; both narrowly escaped being put on our trial for murder or manslaughter, for I had a bullet hole in my hat, and my adversary had one in the sleeve of his coat. Then, "honour being satisfied," we shook hands, and Tom Powrie invited us all to lunch, and a right down good one he gave us.

Shortly after this ridiculous event, the Newcastle-on-Tyne Company, then under the management of Mr. Munro, of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and Mr. Rignold (father of George and William) came to play for a short time in Dundee, and I was so fortunate as to commend myself to their notice, with the result that I was offered an engagement to join the company as light comedian. Here was a step forward indeed!

Having a few weeks to fill in before my return to England, I accompanied Mr. Langley to Cupar in the kingdom (so-called) of Fife. Here there is nothing to chronicle save that I attempted Othello for the first time, that we had bitter bad business, long walks,

continual study and herrings, fresh from the sea, herrings for breakfast, herrings for dinner, and herrings for supper, except upon my last night, when Mr. Langley and the boys entertained me right royally. The banquet had nearly ended in the Tolbooth, for when we approached the market-place, some of the lads were so elevated by their libations that they insisted on climbing to the top of the lamp-posts to emphasise their belief that I was "a jolly good fellow."

Next day I was on my way to Auld Reekie, where I arrived at five or six in the afternoon of a glorious summer day. The very first person I met, as I passed down Leith Walk, was La Petite Tellett, who not only kindly invited me to tea with her, but proposed to effect a reconciliation between Mr. Murray and myself. To this end she accompanied me to the theatre. Singularly enough, we encountered the autocrat just as he was about to enter the box office. My reception was "the north side of friendly."

"Here is one of your pupils, who is on his way to England to join the Newcastle-on-Tyne Company as light comedian," said my mediatrix.

"Indeed!" responded Murray coldly.

"Yes! And so I thought I'd bring him round to pay his respects—and to say Good-bye."

"Good-bye is easily said."

"And—he—he would like to see the play."

"The free list is entirely suspended," was the Arctic response.

"That difficulty is easily obviated. I can pay, sir!" I replied.

"Glad to hear it. Good-bye."

Our interview was over, and we parted under a cloud. The play was *The Brigand*—very beautifully done, with new scenery, costumes, etc. Glover was a capital "Massaroni." When the play was over, he and half a dozen of the boys took me to supper, and the night was fading into morning when we parted. They turned up at the station to see me off. As the train rolled away they gave me "Good-bye" and "God speed" with a parting cheer. As they faded from my sight in a mist of tears, then—but not till then—did I appreciate their worth and knew how unjust I had been to them. Friends of my lost youth, through all this gulf of years I recall your honest faces, your jocund voices. Alas! I shall never see or hear them again, for ye have all preceded me on that voyage over the unknown sea which we must all take, and whither, indeed, I soon must follow.

By mid-day I was in Glasgow, bidding good-bye to my friends there, and at night I embarked at Greenock for Liverpool.

The parley between Mr. Murray and myself in the box lobby of the Adelphi Theatre unfortunately proved final. Two years later at Bristol Mr. Macready asked me if he could do anything to help me. Now Glover had written me word that he was going into management in Glasgow, and invited me to join him; so I replied to Macready, "Yes, sir, I should dearly like to play the leading business in Edinburgh." His "Eminence" wrote Murray at once, urging him to

engage me. Whether he had relented and repented past unkindness, or whether it was out of mere courtesy to Macready, I know not, but I am happy to say the Autocrat of the North wrote me a most charming letter, expressing his regret for past misunderstandings, alleging that, if he had occasionally been hard upon me, it was for my own good, congratulating me upon my rapid progress, and regretting that circumstances precluded the possibility, etc.

As my connection with Edinburgh, except as an occasional wandering star, ceased from that time forth, I devote a few words to my colleagues of half a century ago.

My old friend Mackay finally retired from public life on April 25th, 1848, when he appeared in two of his favourite characters—the Bailie in *Rob Roy*, and Jock Howieson in *Cramond Brig*. He was kind enough to send me a copy of *The Scotsman* with his farewell address, in the course of which he said :

“Few, alas! very few, are present who witnessed my first appearance on these boards—now more than a quarter of a century ago. That appearance I owed chiefly to the success that had attended my humble efforts in the delineation of a certain character while a member of the Aberdeen Company. Shortly after my coming here, I was again entrusted with the same character, and on the first night that *Rob Roy* was performed on this stage, the Great Unknown (for, though great, he was then unknown) was one of the audience. At this moment, as Hamlet says, ‘I see him in



my mind's eye,' as he sat leaning on his staff on the back seat of one of the boxes." (Here Mr. Mackay pointed with his finger to the spot occupied by Sir Walter Scott on that occasion.) "Never shall I forget the sparkle of his eye and the good-humoured smile on his face on that, to me, momentous night. It is to the pen of the mighty dead I owe my theatrical reputation. Had he never written, I never should have been noticed as an actor. The kindness of Sir Walter Scott was, ladies and gentlemen, as some of you well know, only equalled by his genius; and on the night when he declared himself to be the author of the novels, you may judge of my surprise when he was pleased to say before the then assembled hundreds 'that the skeleton he had drawn had been so faithfully clothed by his friend Bailie Nicol Jarvie that he was grateful!' "My conscience!" grateful to me! There was a compliment! And from such a man! So far from clothing skeletons, I felt that I was but labouring to embody the most perfect delineations that ever issued from the mind of man! No wonder, then, I have always been proud of the cognomen of Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Some friends have, at times, apologised for calling me the Bailie, little thinking of the pleasure I experienced in hearing it. The Bailie has now been before you for many a year, and, though I have been often tempted by liberal offers to leave you, I have preferred remaining in my native city before an indulgent audience, and with a kind and liberal manager. When *I* am gone, *he* alone remains the last of all the performers in the original cast of

*Rob Roy*. We have now been associated together as actor and manager for the space of thirty years, and during the whole of that lengthened period, one angry word has never passed between us."

Dear old Bailie, you were more fortunate than I was !

Three years later (1851) Mr. Murray himself retired ; whereupon Lloyd took the Theatre Royal, and Wyndham the Adelphi, while Glover, as already stated, migrated to Glasgow. Through an unexpected fluke, my dear old comrade had alighted on his feet. When the Jenny Lind fever was at its height, he was so fortunate as to secure her for the Scottish towns, and made a handsome sum by the speculation. When he commenced his managerial career, Alexander had retired, the Adelphi had ceased to exist, David Prince Miller had become once more a wandering showman, and Anderson's new and beautiful theatre had been destroyed by fire—a fate which also befell Covent Garden ten or twelve years later, during his disastrous management. I was present on that occasion, and saw that magnificent pile burnt to the ground. Subsequently, after voyaging round the world, Anderson acted *Rob Roy* with me at Leeds, and barely a fortnight before his death Mr. Tom Taylor and I met him in the Isle of Man, where we dined together and had a most interesting time with him.

That eccentric genius Alexander had no sooner retired to enjoy the ample fortune he had amassed, than he was stricken down with an insidious and mortal malady. The most distinguished physicians in Scotland were summoned to hold a consultation in the

hope of saving his life, but his disease baffled their skill, and his case was pronounced hopeless. When he heard the fatal news (December 15th, 1851) he merely muttered, "Hard! d—d hard!" turned his face to the wall, and died! Sad to relate, a few years later, the fortune acquired by long years of honourable industry was lost through the failure of an infamous Glasgow bank, which brought ruin to thousands of innocent homes. The Theatre Royal, however, remained to the Alexander family, and was let to my excellent good friend Simpson, the Birmingham manager. Thereupon Glover took Hengler's Circus, converted it into a theatre, and carried everything before him until two years later, when, on Simpson's retirement, he annexed the Theatre Royal, in addition to which he took the Paisley Theatre, and built a new and commodious one at Greenock.

No such success, however, attended the early efforts of his comrades, Lloyd and Wyndham. At the end of his first season the former threw up the sponge, joined forces with Glover, and became one of the great features of the Glasgow Company. On his secession, a young and ambitious actor-author, named Henry Leslie, stepped into his shoes. An incessant struggle for existence then commenced between the Royal and the Adelphi, and it was a question as to which would cave in first. Both managers were steeped to the lips in debt and difficulties. At that time the right of "sanctuary" still existed in Edinburgh, and Wyndham assured me that for a considerable period he was compelled to avail himself of it for six days in

the week. The Sabbath, during which no one could be arrested for debt, he passed in the bosom of his family, returning to sanctuary at midnight. Upon one occasion, having made a mistake in the time, he had to run for dear life, pursued by a couple of bailiffs, barely escaping arrest by the skin of his teeth.

When things had got to the worst, Leslie made a bolt of it and slipped across the Border. I have often heard Mrs. Wyndham tell the story of that eventful Saturday. She did not know that her rival had made himself scarce. During the week the business had been awful ; at the Adelphi the entire receipts did not amount to half the current expenses. It was imperative, however, to meet the treasury, if the doors were to be kept open. "Bob" was in "sanctuary" and in despair. But his better half was a woman of courage and infinite resources. On Saturday morning a luminous idea occurred, which enabled her to retrieve the situation. Sandy, the hall porter, was usually obfuscated with whisky by mid-day—never drunk, but frequently incapable, and always abnormally stupid. Treasury was due at one ; it was now ten. She had two black leather bags in which the receipts were carried to and fro : in one of these receptacles she placed the few pounds she had scraped together for treasury ; in the other she put a couple of pounds' worth of copper coins and a bunch of keys. The bag containing the gold and silver she took with her, the other she left at home. Fortunately there was no rehearsal. On arrival at the theatre at a quarter to twelve, she found Sandy more obfuscated than usual, and had some difficulty in making

him understand that he must go to Joppa (four miles distant) to bring the other black bag, which she alleged she had forgotten. When he had gone, she mounted a chair, put the clock an hour forward, and opened treasury at twelve o'clock instead of one. The cleaners, carpenters, and property men, who were actually in attendance, and a few others of the small fry, were promptly and fully paid. The treasury was opened and shut in ten minutes, and by twenty past twelve the astute manageress was on her way back to Joppa, loudly protesting, as she left the box office, that if people didn't attend treasury in time, they must take the consequences; that Mr. Wyndham was ill (poor Bob was always "ill" when in sanctuary!), and she wouldn't wait for any one.

When the company turned up at one o'clock, and found "the ghost did not walk" as usual, but that it *had* walked already and vanished; and when they found the clock in the hall pointed to two when it should have pointed to one, they were dumbfounded. But she had saved the ship, for that night the Theatre Royal closed, and the Adelphi was packed to suffocation. The company were paid their salaries in full, and the foundation-stone of Wyndham's fortune was laid!

Hence it comes to pass, that to this day his son is proprietor of the Theatre Royal and the Lyceum, Edinburgh, the Theatre Royal and the Royalty, Glasgow, and the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and has succeeded to a princely inheritance.

And now that Murray is about to retire for ever from

this narrative, I avail myself of my friend Lloyd's pathetic description of the tragic termination of my old manager's interesting career. In his reminiscences, published in *The Glasgow Citizen*, Lloyd states :

“It was in 1851 that Mr. Murray retired from the stage, not in very good health, and, as he said, ‘thoroughly tired of the profession and everything connected with it.’ His private theatrical wardrobe he gave away ; and, to my surprise, he told me that he had burnt every document reminding him of his long connection with the stage, including a beautifully kept and interesting diary, extending over twenty-one years ! Leaving Edinburgh, he went with his wife and family to reside at St. Andrews, a favourite resort of his, where he used frequently to spend his holidays, when he did not go to London. There he died very suddenly on May 5th, 1852, not a year from the date of his retirement. I received an intimation of his death, and, a couple of days later, an invitation to the funeral. I went, and was much affected when I reflected on the many years I had spent under his admirable management. After the ceremony was over, my old friend, Major Sir Hugh Playfair, who was present, came forward and said, ‘Lloyd, come and dine with me ; I want to tell you some particulars of poor Murray’s death.’ On arriving at Playfair’s house, we found Professor Balfour waiting for us. After dinner our host gave me the following account, which I shall give as nearly as possible in his own words :

“ ‘From the time he came to settle in St. Andrews,’ said Sir Hugh, ‘we became very intimate ; and the

very night he died, he and Mrs. Murray were at a small party here. We had some music, and then to supper, after which I ventured to ask him if he would kindly sing us his old song, which no one could sing like him—"The Fine old English Gentleman." I never saw him in such excellent spirits before ; and he consented at once. He got on as usual until the lines :

But time, though old, is strong in flight,  
And years went swiftly by ;  
And autumn's falling leaf foretold  
The good old man must die :  
He laid him down, and tranquilly  
Gave up life's latest sigh—

" ' At the words, "He laid him down," poor Murray seemed all at once to be choking with emotion. He burst into tears, put his handkerchief to his eyes, and buried his face in it. After a little, turning to Mrs. Murray, he said, "Let us go home, my dear." She at once left the room to prepare for going, and returned quickly, saying, "I'm ready, William." We shook hands and they left.

" ' About half an hour later I had a message from Mrs. Murray, asking me to come to her immediately. I started at once ; but when I arrived, poor Murray was no more ! Mrs. Murray told me that, after leaving our house, they walked on very slowly, Mr. Murray being unusually silent, until getting within about twenty yards of their own door. Then he let go her arm, hurriedly walked on by himself, took out his key, and let himself in. Leaving his hat on the lobby

table, he staggered into the dining-room, sank into his easy-chair, leaned back, and expired without uttering one word ! ' ' "

He always had a presentiment that he would die suddenly, and this seemed to prey upon his mind a good deal. The probability of such a thing was, of course, not lessened by the fact that after any extra fatigue or exertion he was troubled with a pain at the heart. A curious notion of his he mentioned to me on one occasion. After the alarming occurrence when he fell through the window at Duddington, he had an idea that the accident would prove fatal, hence he requested his friend and medical attendant, Liston, when the end was approaching, not to tell him so *in words*, but quietly to put an orange into his hand, and he should understand what was meant. Liston told me afterwards that he never expected he (Murray) would have got over the accident, and that for a considerable time, when he came on his professional visits, he was never without *an orange*. Strange to say, my poor friend survived this terrible accident for thirty years or more ; yet the presentiment which had affected him all his life came true after all. " Quick death is easy " ; let us hope that in his case it was painless.

He had often expressed a desire to be buried in the Abbey Churchyard of St. Andrews with his head to the sea. The latter was a passion with him, and he once said to me, " After I am gone, could such a thing be permitted by my Maker, I should like to hear the sea breaking against the rocks away down below my grave."



With these ideas he had, almost immediately after settling in St. Andrews, acquired a piece of ground in just the site he desired, close to the south wall of the churchyard, overlooking the broad bay of St. Andrews, which he loved so well to gaze upon. There we laid him, and soon afterwards the spot was marked by a tombstone, on which were chiselled these words :

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF

WILLIAM HENRY WOOD MURRAY,

GRANDSON OF

SIR JOHN MURRAY, BART., OF BROUGHTON,

AND WHO, FOR UPWARDS OF FORTY YEARS, WAS LESSEE AND  
MANAGER OF THE THEATRE ROYAL AND ADELPHI, EDINBURGH.

BORN 26TH MAY, 1790.

DIED 5TH MAY, 1855.

*"Requiescat in Pace."*

## CHAPTER XIX

### RETURN TO ENGLAND

Return to England—*Toujours Bertram*—*The Early Days of Hamlet* and *The Latter Days of Shylock*—The Author thereof and E. L. Blanchard—Wolverhampton—*The Black Country and Green Border Land*—Meads of Asphodel and Deepes of Hades—The Rignolds—The African Roscius—"Miserable Dickey."

I LEFT Liverpool a steerage passenger without the means of paying for a bed. I returned there first-class, and with one of the best berths in the ship; and, better still, I escaped scot free without paying toll to Neptune!

Having a couple of days to spare, I concluded to stay and patronise the Liverpool theatres. The Royal was closed. The Amphitheatre was still under the management of Copeland, and, strange to say, still acting *Bertram*. Hammond had cast anchor at the Adelphi (a new theatre in Christian Street), where he was acting a red-hot Victorian drama by Mr. Tom Higgin, whom I had seen in my childish days at Derby, and whom I was destined to know intimately hereafter. The Liver, a new theatre in Lord Street, under the management of a popular Irish comedian whose very name escapes me now (though I met him afterwards as Phelps' manager at Sadler's Wells), attracted my attention by the announcement of *Yorick, the King's*

*Jester*; or, *The Early Days of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, by the author of *Shakespeare's Early Days*, which, it will be remembered, cost me my last pair of "white ducks" during my first engagement at Windsor. Although "a thing of shreds and patches," this remarkable work interested me much from its atrocious audacity. Hamlet's father appeared "in his habit as he lived"; the Prince himself, his mother Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes, Horatio, and Yorick also figured conspicuously. The main interest, however, centred in the machinations of the arch-villain Claudius, who not only seduced his sister-in-law, but, despite the gallant efforts of Yorick to save his hapless master, succeeded in poisoning him "with juice of cursed hebenon in a phial," and finally killed the faithful jester himself.

Yorick, who was really the hero of the play, was acted by a great local favourite, Mr. C. J. Marshall, an admirable actor and father of a race of actors who have since attained celebrity in both hemispheres; while Mr. Stanislaus Calhaem (then a dapper, elegant little fellow, who only lacked inches and a resonant voice to make him a great actor) was the youthful Hamlet.

So impressed was I with this audacious experiment that, when during an early period of my managerial career the author proposed to write for me the *After Days of Shylock* for a ten-pound note, I took him at his word, and he sent me the play, which, I blush to say, remains unacted and even unread to this day. *Apropos* of this indefatigable but unfortunate scribe, Edward Laman Blanchard told me that the last time he ever saw him was many years ago in the vicinity of the

Pavilion Theatre. Prematurely old and white-headed, blind as Belisarius, and led by a little white dog, the once popular dramatist carried a tablet hung round his neck, on which was inscribed these words :

BLIND !

AN M.A. OF OXFORD

MASTER OF FIVE LANGUAGES

And Author of a hundred successful Plays !

BEGS FOR BREAD

Alas ! his star, which arose at Covent Garden under the auspices of Charles Kemble, set in a miserable garret at Whitechapel ! The poor gentleman's epitaph might well have been crystallised in two immortal lines of his equally unfortunate predecessor, Marlowe of the mighty line :

Twisted is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough !

Knowing no one at Liverpool, and nothing more remaining to be seen, I made the best of my way to Wolverhampton. On my arrival I found a letter from Newcastle-on-Tyne intimating that, in consequence of the postponement of the races at Wolverhampton, the opening would be delayed a week. Hence I had a week's holiday, which I devoted to exploring the town and neighbourhood, having previously paid a

visit to the theatre, which proved to be both elegant and commodious. It had only been opened two or three years, and had been extremely prosperous.

At the principal hotel, where I stayed for the first night, I fortunately came across Elihu Burritt's *Walks in the Black Country and its Green Border Land*, and as soon as I had secured comfortable "diggings," set forth to tread in the learned blacksmith's footsteps. First, however, I made a descent upon St. Peter's Collegiate Church, said to have been founded upwards of a thousand years ago by Wulfrena, the widow of Atheln, Thane of Northumberland; though how the relict of that northern chieftain came to pitch her tent in the heart of Mercia does not appear so clear as the fact that the town takes its name from her. There is, or used to be in those days, in the churchyard a huge Druidical stone, which interested me greatly, but which no one could explain. The town itself had few objects of interest, so off I went to Tettenhall, a pretty hamlet two or three miles distant, with a charming old church, a picturesque churchyard, and a queer monument of a woman without arms or legs, and a remarkable legend about her which I quite forget.

Next day I penetrated to Penge Castle, a magnificent old edifice of a composite order, with a famous gallery of family pictures, which, by the courtesy of the house-keeper and a modest honorarium, I was permitted to inspect. The following day I made my way to Whiteladies and to Boscobel, where I was shown the cheese-room and the secret nook in the chimney of the closet, and the Royal Oak, where that graceless but

lovable scoundrel Charles II. sought shelter after the defeat at Worcester.

The bold Burritt was right: "The Green Borderlands are beautiful, but the Black Country? O-o-h!" In the one I wandered knee deep in meads of Asphodel; in the other I was lost in the depths of Hades! The route from Wolverhampton to Birmingham by night is the best guide to Dante that I know. The huge heaps of slag, the blast of the roaring furnaces, the sulphurous stench of the hell-pits, the horde of half-savage colliers, their foul-mouthed objurgations, the gangs of half-naked women engaged in forging nails, amazed and horrified me! I could scarce trust the evidence of my senses as I stood gaping on this extraordinary spectacle.

One huge, elephantine hussy roared, "Wall! wot's up? Hast great babby yonner never seed a wench in her buff afore?"

This sally evoked such a yell from her fellow labourers that I turned tail and bolted amidst a chorus of derision from these poor unsexed creatures.

Like Macbeth, I found myself inquiring—

Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud  
Without our special wonder?

But I am speaking of half a century ago, and let us hope these horrors have vanished with other relics of the barbarous past! But have they? I wonder—how I wonder!

Having learnt from a local paper that a drama on

the opera of *The Prophet* was being done in Birmingham, I went over to see it. The parts were admirably acted by Mr. James Bennett, Mr. Harcourt Beattie, Mr. Harry Webb, "Bobby" Atkins, Miss Fanny Vining, and other distinguished artists. I have since heard and seen the opera house at Covent Garden, and in Paris—at the old opera house in the Rue le Pelletier ; and the new one (Graniers). Neither the one nor the other production excelled in accuracy and splendour the *mise en scène* of this production in a country theatre. A few years later I saw the same play produced at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, by Augustus Harris the elder, and the magnificence of that production eclipsed even Birmingham. I record this youthful impression because it is so frequently and continually alleged that plays were "pitchforked" on the provincial stage in those days.

At last my holiday was over, and I went to pay my respects to my new manager, or I should say to one of them, for the other, Mr. James Munro, a veteran of seventy, had taken to himself a buxom flower of the faithful city of Worcester unto wife, and the gay young dog was off on his honeymoon. The partner, Mr. William Rignold, greeted me with a cordial hand-shake and a solatium for my week's idleness in the shape of a week's salary! Evidently I had dropped my lines in pleasant places. This gentleman had been a dancer. Now a male dancer is my abhorrence; yet this great manly fellow had not only been a dancer, but was actually bringing up his sons to the same business. Yes! I have seen

my excellent good friends, George and William (whose terrible affliction we all so deeply deplore!) dance hornpipes as well as T. P. Cooke, and "play upon the fiddle like a brace of angels."

Mrs. William Rignold, the mother of these two admirable actors, was built in a majestic mould, and might have posed for the mother of the Gracchi. She was one of the very best "heavy" actresses of the period. In Lady Macbeth, Lady Randolph, Queen (*Hamlet*), Elvira (*Pizarro*), Alicia (*Jane Shore*), Mrs. Candour, Lady Townley, and Mrs. Sheppard (mother to the famous Jack), she was unrivalled. Nor did her accomplishments end here. To my astonishment, one night she appeared as Hamlet; while to my yet greater amazement, at a later period, she actually appeared as Virginius! Yes! she transformed herself into the Roman father, actually *bearded* as a Roman centurion should be! Prejudiced as I was against this unnatural transmogrification, candour constrains me to say that as a mere *tour de force* the experiment succeeded to a marvel. The house was crowded from floor to ceiling, and the audience received the play with enthusiasm, to the intense mortification of the tragedian of the company, who regarded these irregular incursions into his territory with anything but equanimity.

Our company was numerous and fairly efficient. Our juvenile lady, Mrs. Ware (sister of Mrs. Buckingham White), was a charming and accomplished young woman. Miss Le Batt and her sister Georgina, were both beautiful. Indeed, the former was a gorgeous creature. As Apollo in *Midas and Ixion* she was



a sight for men and gods to admire—perhaps a shade too gorgeous ; but so superbly symmetrical that it might have been said of her, as Byron said of Dudu, “ ’Twould have spoiled a charm to pare ! ”

Our houses were so good that we were quite independent of “ stars ” ; indeed, there were only two auxiliaries who appeared during the season namely, Miss Woolgar, who had just made a great hit at the Haymarket as Lady Alice Hawthorne in Boucicault’s comedy, *Old Heads and Young Hearts*, and the African Roscius, whom it will be remembered I had previously seen in Derby. Miss Woolgar was accompanied by her father, my first tragedian. From the moment I first saw the fair Bella—her name was Sarah, but we always called her Bella—I had been enamoured of her youth, her grace, and beauty. I had seen her in Derby, Birmingham, and London (at the Adelphi), when she made her first appearance as Bella in *The Wreck Ashore*, and at the Lyceum, where I saw her, together with the Keeleys and the beautiful Miss Farebrother, in my first burlesque, *The Forty Thieves*. Hitherto I had only seen her over the footlights ; now I was about to meet her face to face. She was announced to open as Phœbe, the saucy soubrette in *Paul Pry* ; I was Harry Stanley, a “ cheeky ” young middy continually brought in contact with her, and in one situation I had to say, “ And you, my pretty Phœbe, your lips are as full of forgiveness as mine are of repentance, so kiss me, you little devil ! ” and here I had to suit the action to the word ! We didn’t rehearse the “ business ”<sup>1</sup> in

<sup>1</sup> “ Business,” in stage parlance, means “ action.”

the morning, but it was perfectly understood that it would "be all right at night!" When night came, the theatre was crowded—indeed, overcrowded—by a somewhat obstreperous audience, who became so noisy that we were brought to a dead standstill at the osculatory moment; whereupon the fair Bella "cut" the speech which led up to mine, and, tossing her head, saucily whispered to me, "Go on, sir!"

"Not without my cue!" I replied in the same tone.

"You're an impudent young monkey!" rejoined Bella; but she gave me my cue, notwithstanding, and I—oh, joy! oh, rapture!—was rewarded with a kiss!

The next night we played *Modus* and *Helen*, and I had to give her another in my part, and I did! The night after we played *Rosalind* and *Orlando*, and I had to make love to her. I was an ardent and amorous youth in those days; the ladies of the company vowed that I looked as if I were about to eat her, and I think they were right.

On the Friday night we played *Old Heads and Young Hearts*. She was *Lady Alice* and I was *Lyttleton Coke* (Charles Mathews' part). Here again I was continually making love to her. I was not quite clear about the words, and asked her to run through our lines at the wings. In the principal scene I had to kiss her again, and, lest I should miss fire on the stage, I attempted to rehearse it "off." "The attempt, but not the deed," confounded me; my impudence was rewarded with a couple of stinging boxes on the ear, one from my divinity herself, and the other from the stern parent, who appeared most inopportunately at that moment.

Fortunately our next interview was not the osculatory one, so I had time to recover my presence of mind before we "came to cues."

"May I?" I inquired before we went on.

"May you what?"

"Do the business?"

"Certainly!"

When the critical moment arrived, I did do it—did it for all it was worth.

My lady gasped and looked grave.

"I said business, not pleasure, you villain!"

"I'm combining both!" I replied.

She laughed, and I was forgiven. Next day she returned to town, soon afterwards became Mrs. Alfred Mellon, and we didn't meet again for years.

The Woolgars were followed by the African Roscius, who enacted Othello, Zanga in *The Revenge*, Oroonoko and the Slave to crowded houses.

During this engagement I had one or two opportunities for distinction, and made the most of them. My grand coups were made in Aboan, in Oroonoko, and Alonzo in *The Revenge*, which reminds me of the nonsense so frequently emitted as to the alleged antagonism between the Church and Stage.

The first English secular play ever acted (*Gammer Gurton's Needle*) was written by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, while the miracle plays which preceded it were all written and acted by the monks themselves. *The Revenge* was written by a parson, the author of the famous *Night Thoughts*; *The Suspicious Husband*, by Doctor Hoadley, Bishop of Winchester; *Pride shall have a Fall*,

by Dr. Croly, author of *Salathiel*; *Fazio* by Milman, Dean of St. Paul's; *Barbarossa* and *Douglas* were both by parsons. Maturin, the author of *Bertram*, was also a clergyman. Freeman Wills has written half-a-dozen plays, and actually while these lines are being written Forbes Phillips' (the Vicar of Gorleston's) play, *For Church and Stage*, has been successfully produced at Blackpool by the charming Mrs. Brown Potter.

To return, however, to Oroonoko, or rather to Aboan : Oroonoko is a prince ; so is Aboan, both gentlemen of colour. The Roscius, who was dark as ebony, toned his sable hue down to a copper tint ; on the other hand, I was black as burnt cork and Indian ink could make me. Our tragedian, Mr. Benson, lent me his Othello wig ; the ladies lent me half-a-dozen coral necklaces and bracelets, and a heap of glittering gewgaws and gimcracks. Being the colliers' pay-night, they trooped in from Bilston and the adjacent neighbourhood, crowding the pit, the gallery, and the upper circle to overflowing. I had to precede and pave the way for the reception of the Roscius, and when I strutted on in all my finery, to my astonishment the pit "rose at me," and the gallery followed suit. It was the first really great reception I ever had. I placed my hand on my heart and bobbed and bowed. The more I bobbed, the more the audience applauded. Amidst the uproar, on strode Oroonoko. A dead silence ensued ; for a moment a pin might have been heard drop. Then an Olympian exclaimed to his "butty," "Say, Dick, I'm gawmed if the fat 'un ain't the real blackamoor !"

To which Dick responded, "Naa, lad, that canna be, for t'other chap's a d——d sight blacker !"

There were no young men in the company, so I "chummed" with a little melancholy low comedian yclept "Miserable Dicky." This doleful droll had been a protégé of the renowned Robert Willian Elliston, under whose banner he had served at Leamington, Coventry, the Olympic, Drury Lane, and the Surrey. "Dicky" always travelled with a silver fork and spoon; hence, whenever he inquired for lodgings, he was wont to grandiosely accost his prospective landlady after this fashion, "Mind, madam! I always travel with my own plate!"

Despite his grandiosity and eccentricity, he was a good specimen of a type of actor now extinct as the Dodo. His highest salary (at Drury Lane) was five guineas a week, his present was *two*; he lived on half, and put by the other half for a rainy day—dressed like a gentleman, was never seen to enter a public-house, and was never known to be in debt or difficulty. Being a lonely old bachelor, he took a fancy to me. Every Sunday we took a long walk prior to dining together. He was the host one Sunday, I the next. We always managed a plate of soup, a morsel of fish, a stewed steak or a rabbit, and a tart or a dumpling. Whoever was the host, Dicky always provided the liquid refreshment in a flask, and it was always the same—a small dose of Geneva.

Whenever I acted a part of importance, my old friend never left the wings, and every Sunday after dinner he held a post-mortem examination on the week's work. I thought I had distinguished myself in *The Revenge*, and told him so.

"Distinguished be d——d!" he burst out. "You

spoke the words right enough—you've a voice to thank God for, if you only knew how to use it! You can fence, you can dance, but you don't know how to use your legs or your arms, don't know how to come on the stage or how to go off—you don't know how to walk or even to stand! Why, even that hideous old buck-nigger looked like a man beside you, with your legs tied up in knots. Atop of all this, you're giving way to 'Mac's' worst mannerisms; you mug and you growl like a bear with a sore head! Cut it—cut it! Stamp it out, or it'll stamp you out, and you'll be a thirty-bob-a-week Hamlet as long as you live! That's what you'll be!"

That was the most useful object lesson I ever had in my life. Every word Dicky said was true, though I didn't know it till he opened my eyes. Knowing it, I resolutely set to work to cure myself, and never rested morning, noon, and night till I succeeded in doing so.

Our season lasted but three months, and was over all too soon. I was fortunate enough, however, to obtain an immediate engagement in the Worcester circuit. Closing in Wolverhampton on the Saturday night, I commenced at Shrewsbury the following Monday. Dear old Dicky returned to Newcastle-on-Tyne for his vacation, and we never met again!

## CHAPTER XX

### *THE WORCESTER CIRCUIT AND THEATRE ROYAL, LIVERPOOL*

The Worcester Circuit—Terry O'Rourke and the Terries—A Bumper Benefit—An Interrupted Banquet and an Inexorable Manager—Kate and Ellen Terry—Sophie Miles and Henrietta Hodson—Coventry—Tennyson and *Lady Godiva*—The Shakespeare Country, Stratford-on-Avon, Leamington, Warwick, and Kenilworth—Promoted to Liverpool Theatre Royal—Tom Mead and the Text—The Lovely Emmeline Montague and the Beautiful Mrs. Maddocks—An Explosion which clears the Air—Vandenhoff the Elder—Fanny Kemble returns to the Stage—A Mature Julia and an Immature Clifford—"Do it! nor leave the Task to me!"—Another Coleman in the Field—Enter Barry Sullivan and Bob Brough—The Magnificent Mrs. John Brougham and the Excellent Mrs. Charles Selby—The Ebullient Nesbitt—"Genesis of La Fotheringay"—James Browne—Creswick, Couldock, and Swinbourne, Harry Nye, and Old Addison—Remarkable Incident concerning my "Thingamys" and a Beautiful Incognita—The Baron—The Baroness—The *Tableaux Vivants* and what came of them—"Mother Shawnee"—A Fight—Sullivan engaged for Manchester—So am I—We depart together—"Mother Shawnee" makes the *Amende Honorable*.

ON arriving at Shrewsbury, my new manager turned out to be my old Ivanhoe of Ashby de la Zouch.

Having introductions to the mayor, to Ousely the poet and editor of the principal local journal, I presented them, and made my way alone to the spot where, tradition says, Harry Percy and Harry of Lancaster fought their first and last fight; after this,

to the bridge which divides England and Wales—"the gentle Severn's sedgy banks" and the beautiful Quarry. A charming old-world town this; no wonder the Salopians are proud of their dear old Shrewsbury.

At night I was off to the theatre to take stock of my new colleagues. The first piece was a clean, wholesome minor theatre drama, called *The Old House at Home*, of which I retain but an imperfect recollection. I make out, however, that Miss Noel (Mrs. George Hodson, sister of Mrs. Henry Marston, and mother of Mrs. Labouchere) is leading lady, that Miss Jane Trafford is a piquant and pretty soubrette, Miss Hendrique an agile and handsome *danseuse*, and Mrs. Granby a capital actress in the Mrs. Glover line; Mrs. Terry—a rather willowy but handsome woman, and mother of Kate, Ellen, Maud, and Florence, and two or three boys—is a charming actress-of-all-work, and that Mr. Ben Terry is as useful as his better half is ornamental.

Mr. W. Sidney, a dry but quaint comedian, is stage manager; Mr. Bathurst, a handsome walking gentleman, is supposed to be brother of Miss Trafford, and a little Irishman with a ferocious brogue veils Terry O'Rourke under the pseudonym afterwards known as Edmund Falconer, author of *Peep o' Day* and manager of the Lyceum and Drury Lane. The little man's brogue, however, is buttered with brains. This is his second season as leading man. He is already in possession of Hamlet. Hamlet quotha! Hamlet with that face and figure! Wait and we shall see! I do wait, and I have seen many worse Hamlets than Terry O'Rourke. Anyhow, it is stipulated in my engagement that I am



to be Romeo, Young Norval, and Melnotte, Charles Surface, Rover, Doricourt, Young Rapid, Young Marlowe, and Sir Robert Ramble.

In Wolverhampton "the old order had yielded to the new," and we acted every night. Here we returned to the old system, played only three nights a week, which afforded us time for rehearsals and study; hence our pieces (standard works and popular dramas of the day, *Green Bushes*, etc.) were done with great propriety to good, frequently overflowing houses. The Shrewsbury folk were kind beyond my deserts, and crowded the theatre upon my benefit night, on which occasion the programme consisted of *The Lady of Lyons* (then at the height of its popularity), *Blue Devils* (selected especially for Terry O'Rourke, who was not in the first piece), and *High Life Below Stairs*. All the seats were taken at the box office. Thus assured of a good house, I needed little persuasion to provide a hot supper and copious libations instead of the customary bread, fowl, and toast and water for the supper scene. The repast, which was provided at my hotel, consisted of soup, a cod's head and shoulders, a saddle of mutton, and an apple tart. Such a sight had never been seen in the Shrewsbury Theatre before, and in all probability has never been seen since. When the savoury odours exuding from these delectable viands ascended into the front of the house, they created the sensation of the evening, and the applause was almost deafening.

It was an inflexible rule (and a very good one too) that the performance should terminate at eleven o'clock. Now just as Lady Charlotte, His Grace the Duke,

Sir Harry, and their aristocratic friends sat down to supper, the clock struck the fatal hour. Whether our worthy manager considered the loud and long-continued applause a reproach to his parsimony, or whether he was influenced by a mere ebullition of temper, I can't tell; whatever the cause, he rang down the curtain, and, amidst a violent outburst of disapproval from the audience, ordered the band to play "God save the Queen," and put out the lights! It was in vain that I appealed to him for permission to finish our repast on the stage. I met with nothing but a curt and decided negative, and an intimation that we must clear out in a quarter of an hour. I was, however, equal to the occasion. The banquet was removed to the hotel, where we adjourned and "shut up in measureless content."

O'Rourke told me that this peremptory managerial *coup* was nothing compared to what had occurred at Worcester during the previous season on the occasion of his benefit. The after-piece was *Eugene Aram*. Terry had an especial weakness for his death scenes, and he never "shuffled off his mortal coil" in less than a quarter of an hour. Provided with his quietus in the shape of a phial of poison, he leisurely commenced operations, when, lo! the clock struck eleven! At that moment on came the bold Bennett with a black cloak thrown over his every-day costume.

"Ah! my dear Aram," he exclaimed in his airiest tones, "don't trouble to poison yourself! The Home Secretary has sent a reprieve, and Madeleine is waiting to be married. Edwards [to leader

of orchestra], "strike up 'Troubles o'er, Joys in Store,' Ring down!" and down came the curtain, to the disgust of Aram and delight of the audience!

From Shrewsbury we went to Coventry, where we opened at Christmas to a house crowded to overflowing with girls from the ribbon factories. As our pieces were all, or nearly all, "up," we had an easy time. Tennyson, who was then new to me, was a source of never-ending delight, and with his aid "I shaped the city's ancient legend forth."

Besides which, I explored the musty old church, where Sarah Siddons married her scrubby little low comedian.

Our treasury was a primitive but pleasant function. Punctually as the clock struck twelve every Saturday, our manager turned up with a bag, the contents of which he emptied on the prompt-table. They consisted of a number of little packages (gold and silver), each carefully sealed and labelled with the name of the recipient. The ladies came first, the men next, each answering to her or his name, as Mr. Bennett presented to each "The reward of merit." The whole business was over in five minutes."

On our first Saturday, O'Rourke, Sidney, Ben Terry, and I set off to walk to Stratford-on-Avon, and, oh! what a high time we had upon our first trip to the Bard's birthplace! We visited the house in which he was born, the church where he was married, the bust in the chancel, New Place, and Anne Hathaway's cottage at Shottery. We had an ideal Sunday, walked

back to Coventry that night, and turned up at rehearsal next morning for *Hamlet* fresh as paint.

I recall nothing of any particular interest during our season save that there were delightful visits to Leamington, Warwick, and Kenilworth with a very charming young lady for chaperone.

My stay here was of short duration. I had barely been there a month, when I received an offer for the juvenile business at an increased salary from Mr. Mercer Simpson, for the Theatre Royal, Liverpool. The day of my secession from the Coventry Company synchronised with an event which ultimately marked an epoch in dramatic history.

While I was actually on the way to Lancashire, "a star danced, and under that" my fair friend, Ellen Terry, "was born!"

It was meet the peerless Beatrice should first look upon the light in the native county of the Bard whose fame she has emblazoned before myriads of his disciples in both hemispheres.

On my arrival in Liverpool I found two gentlemen (Mr. James Rodgers and Mr. G. K. Dickenson) already engaged for my line of business. Nor was this all: on entering the green-room, to my intense mortification I found myself "cast" for a series of subordinate parts in Mr. Vandenhoff's pieces. Boiling with indignation, I sought Mr. Robert Roxby (Mr. Simpson's representative), and intimated, without circumlocution, that I didn't intend to play anything out of my line of business. He

was insolent ; I was defiant. One word led to another ; he “ pooh-pooh’d ” and “ boy-boy’d ” me ! Beyond myself with anger, I returned to the green-room, and, to the astonishment and almost to the consternation of everybody, tore down the casts and flung them on the fire !

Harry Nye (afterwards the well-known Brighton manager) was the only soul I knew in that large company, and he inquired, “ What in the name of fate do you mean ? ”

“ Mean ! ” I replied. “ That ginger-headed cad with the peacock’s voice has insulted me by casting me a heap of utility parts, and when I remonstrated, he cheeked me and called me a boy ! ”

“ Boy ! By G——, sir, you’re a man, every inch of you ! ” exclaimed Tom Mead, introducing himself in this unconventional manner, and thus commencing an acquaintance which continued up to the day of the dear old chap’s death.

This little explosion cleared the air, and Roxby not only cast me no more “ utility ” parts, but actually came and apologised for his “ mistake.” As, however, three of us were engaged for the same parts, I only got an occasional “ look in,” which proved “ a blessing in disguise,” as it afforded me ample time for study and elaboration.

Our company was a very strong one. Our ladies were the lovely Emmeline Montague, the beautiful Mrs. Maddocks, the sprightly Kathleen Fitzwilliam, the elegant and accomplished Miss Beaumont. In addition to the men I have already named, there were Creswick Couldock

(afterwards a great popular favourite in America), Tom Swinbourne, old Addison, John Corri (the low comedian), Pat Corri (the singer), James Lunt, and a host of others. Amongst our speechless nobles there were three little cockneys, who afterwards became actors of distinction: Manning, for many years low comedian at the Grecian Saloon; Tapping, at the Lyceum with the Mathews'; and Bigwood, who for years and years has been principal comedian and stage-manager at the Britannia. We had a charming *corps de ballet*, some of whom were beautiful, and all of whom were amiable and obliging. Amongst them were two lovely little Londoners named Polly and Sally, but "that is another story!"

There were one or two rather pretentious "swells" who made themselves perpetual laughing-stocks through their ignorance and incapacity. One imposing personage, a fine-looking wig-block (whom I remember to have seen shortly afterwards as a leading actor at a fashionable West-End theatre), was a never-failing source of amusement. However hard he tried, the poor wretch never could acquire the words. Pat Corri laboured under the same misfortune, with this additional disadvantage, that when he broke down, he burst forth in his native Irish.

Both he and the "swell" were mercilessly chaffed on their shortcomings.

In *Hamlet* the "swell" was the Player King, while Pat was the Second Player. The "swell" managed to get through his first speech without breaking down, but when he came to the next, which it will be remembered commences thus—

Anon he finds him  
Striking too short at Greeks!—

he portentously exclaimed—

Anon he finds him  
Striking at *two* short Greeks!

To cover up this slip, Vandenhoff came to the rescue.

“’Tis well!” quoth he. “I’ll have thee speak out the rest of this soon!”

Whereupon an unsympathetic brute in the pit sarcastically interjected, “God forbid! We’ve had enough already!”

The roar which arose so disconcerted the poor swell that he bolted off the stage, and left them to finish the scene as well as they could without him.

All this, however, was as nothing to Pat Corri’s experience, who, when he essayed to poison the Player King, rendered the text thus:

Thoughts black, hands apt!  
Midnight weeds collected and rejected  
By Hecate, thrice blast her, bad luck to her!  
I, yes, I—by Jabers! I’ll pour it into the owld Geeser’s ear,  
And polish him off at onst!

Not another word could be heard. Yell followed yell, and there was nothing for it but to drop the curtain.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Vandenhoff, “has the little bog-trotter taken leave of his senses? What does this mean, Mr. Corri?”

“Mane, sir, mane? It manes chaps do be

'coddin me' (Dublin for chaffing) till I dun know whether I'm on my head or my heels!"

Corri was not alone in his infirmity. To his dying day Tom Mead could never hammer the words accurately into his head. Although he made the oddest blunders, he laughed them off so genially that one was never sure as to whether he was in jest or earnest. One night I heard him inquire, as Grindoff (*Miller and his Men*), "*Is those sacks disposed of?*"

When Riber replied, "Yes, they *is*," the house and the actors burst into a roar, in which Tom joined as heartily as any one.

In Manchester, with the Vandenhoffs, I remember, some years later, seeing him as a sort of second-hand Romeo (imagine Tom as Romeo!), who is stricken blind. In a scene with Miss Vandenhoff there was a dead stick, and she couldn't, or wouldn't, stir without the text. Mead couldn't remember a line; but he was equal to the occasion.

"Excuse me a moment," said he, as he strode off, returning with the prompt-book, out of which the blind Romeo proceeded to make love to his Juliet.

The only really important event of the Liverpool season was the return of Fanny Kemble to the stage.

I quote the following impressions from one of my earlier books.

"It was at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, that she reappeared; from thence she came to the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, where I had the honour to form her acquaintance. At that period the showman's art had not invaded the profession of a gentleman; advance agents,





*From a drawing after Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.*

MISS FANNY KEMBLE.



press wire-pullers, and so-called acting managers were not in existence. Hence it came to pass that Mrs. Kemble walked upon the Liverpool stage (where we awaited her arrival with anxiety and curiosity) alone and unattended. We had expected to see a tragedy queen. We saw instead a quiet, unassuming lady of middle age and middle height, simply attired in a black silk dress. Her pale, classic features were irradiated by a pair of dark, lustrous eyes, which wore an eerie expression—imperious one moment, pleading the next—and which showed forth in vivid contrast to the glory of her abundant hair, even then slightly streaked with grey at the temples. As we simultaneously bared our heads to the last of the Kembles, she responded to the recognition in one comprehensive and gracious courtesy, then introducing herself *sans cérémonie* to the stage manager, commenced the rehearsal. . . .

“In recalling that memorable night in Liverpool after all these years, I can see in my mind’s eye the wistful, sad face, ‘dumb with the depth of a Divine despair,’ the lustre of the beauteous eyes dimmed with tears, but fixed to the last on Clifford’s letter, as Master Walter led her despairing from the stage. I can hear the matchless melody of ‘’Twas Clifford’s voice if ever Clifford spoke.’ Best of all, I recall the *tour de force* of the last act. I have a vivid recollection of Macready’s ‘Good God! Ulric, yon look!’—of the burst of paternal emotion in *Virginius*, ‘I thank thee, Jupiter, that I am still a father!’—of Forrest’s ‘Let them come! we are prepared!’ in *The Gladiator*—of Brooke’s ‘Oh! fool, fool, fool!’—of Ristori’s ‘Tu!’ in *Medea*—

of Fechter's 'I am *not* a lackey; I am an executioner!'—but not one of these illustrious actors—nay, not all of them combined, ever equalled the grace, the beauty, the tragic fire, the perfect majesty, the commingling of exquisite artifice with perfect art, which Fanny Kemble imparted to the eight commonplace monosyllables, 'Do it! Nor leave the task to me!'"

At the end of the season at the Theatre Royal, to my astonishment and delight, Mr. Copeland sent for me and offered me an engagement at the Amphitheatre. This establishment was open all the year round with the standard works, especially the Shakespearean drama. Hence I obtained much valuable experience, which stood me in good stead hereafter.

The frequent change of performance involved not only considerable trouble, but frequent changes of dress. Ordinary properties, such as swords, boots, and shoes, I kept in a trunk in my dressing-room; but many things had to be taken to and fro nightly. My friend Rowley Cathcart (long after stage manager to the Kendals and Mr. Hare) did not then disdain to earn a humble weekly shilling for pocket money by carrying my carpet bag to and fro.

At this particular period a certain Mr. Henry Coleman (no relation or connection of mine) had taken the Theatre Royal, and placed it again under the direction of Mr. Robert Roxby, who engaged Barry Sullivan as his leading actor. While I was occupied with rehearsal, he came to renew our acquaintance, and (his wardrobe having miscarried) to borrow an indispensable "property," or, to be precise, a pair of black silk tights for Sir

Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, in which gloomy play he was about to open. By the way, those same tights that very same season served to introduce Robert Brough to the stage as Lampedo in *The Honey-moon*, after which inauspicious event (for poor Bob did not set the Mersey on fire!) they went the way of all—tights: they passed from my gaze, and I saw them no more.

The gallery was a shilling in those days; I parted with two, and thither I went with a friend to give the new tragedian a hand.

Latterly it has been the fashion to decry my old comrade as being stilted, formal, old-fashioned, and unnatural; but, as I have already shown, in Glasgow he had been pronounced a walking gentleman actor of tragedy, and unquestionably he was too modern and too natural for this mouthing, super-sensitive, hypochondriacal Mortimer, whose style was no more suited to Sullivan than it was (if George Colman may be believed) to John Kemble.

Barry's second performance was Jaffier (*Venice Preserved*). There was a miserable house, and the good old tragedian who played Pierre was wretchedly imperfect, while the beautiful but unfortunate woman who played Belvidera was worse; but Sullivan in his knowledge of the text was a tower of strength, and pulled the play through to a successful termination. From that moment I felt convinced he only needed time and opportunity to make his way. "The world itself comes round to him who knows how to wait," and ultimately it came round to him.

Among other popular artists at the Theatre Royal were the wives of two distinguished actors and authors, Mrs. John Brougham and Mrs. Charles Selby. The former, built in an opulent mould, was a magnificent creature and a competent actress; while the latter (who will be remembered as the presiding genius of the Royalty during the "Ixion days") was an admirable actress of the Mrs. Glover business. There were also Creswick, Couldock, Tom Swinbourne, Harry Nye, and Addison. Mr. Basil Baker, a hard but conscientious eccentric actor; Mr. Fitzroy, who became ultimately one of the best first old men of the period; and Mr. James Browne, who was beyond doubt the greatest character actor on the English stage! His Dick Dowlas was excellent, but his Dr. Pangloss was unapproachable; his Acres was inimitable; his Austerlitz (*Maid of Croissey*) worthy of Webster at his best. In Robert Macaire he might stand beside Lemaitre himself and "moult no feather"; while his creation of *The Last Man*, in a commonplace drama founded upon Mrs. Shelley's morbid story, was the most impressive study of the kind I have ever witnessed. The last scene, in which he conjured into life the phantoms of the dead and buried past, haunted me for weeks, and, after all these years, comes back upon me even now with a thrill which time has scarcely weakened.

The only impersonations of recent date worthy of comparison with this amazing *tour de force* are Webster's Bastille Scene in *The Dead Heart*, Henry Irving's *Waterloo*, Wilson Barrett's *Manxman*, and Herbert Tree's *Man with a Past*!

The advent of Mrs. Nesbitt (Lady Boothby) as Lady Gay Spanker, Neighbour Constance, Rosalind, and Lady Teazle, attracted capital houses, and though past the bloom of her youth she excited universal admiration. In Rosalind she followed the "Saucy lackey" traditions of Mrs. Jordan, and from that point of view was perfect ; but she did not efface the image of Helen Faucit. *La Nesbitt's* Lady Teazle was excellent, but not super-excellent ; but as Lady Gay Spanker and Neighbour Constance she was inimitable. In these two characters she had never been equalled before, and has never been approached since.

It has been asserted that Thackeray founded his *Fotheringay* upon Lady Beedier (Miss O'Neil). Phelps positively assured me that he (Thackeray) was hopelessly "gone" on Mrs. Nesbitt, but that she could not get over her aversion to his broken nose, and was indiscreet enough to say so, hence *La Fotheringay* and his malignant attacks on the theatre. The recollection of this charming woman is one of the pleasures of memory which reconciles one to the knowledge that one is unfortunately a little more than five-and-twenty.

A somewhat remarkable incident occurred to me at or about this time. Upon arriving at the theatre one evening, I found that, in consequence of the indisposition of Mr. Cathcart, we had to change the play from *Macbeth* to *The Honeymoon*, in which I enacted Rolando. Now this woman-hating soldier of fortune was one of my pet parts, and I had a pair of splendidly embroidered orange-coloured "silk tights" made expressly for him.

Being valuable, they were left at home when not in use, so off I ran to fetch them. As I rushed into my room, somebody, with a cry of alarm, darted behind the bed-curtains and was lost to sight.

"Who's there? Who's there?" I cried.

"Ah! let me go—let me go!" implored a sweet voice in the most delicious Irish brogue imaginable. "Sure it's covered with shame I am!"

Unable to understand what this incoherent exclamation meant, I plucked the curtain aside, when, lo and behold! a young and beautiful girl stood there! The poor child was "covered with shame" certainly, but with little else, except, indeed, my Rolando "tights" and her bonnie brown hair, which streamed down to her knees. Her appearance in this airy costume in my bedroom astounded me, and I said, with as much gravity as I could command under the circumstances, "Suppose I were to alarm the house and call the police?"

"And me like this? Ah! ye wouldn't—ye couldn't have the heart to do it!"

"I don't know about that. How came you here?"

"Well, I'm the two pair back, and I saw you wid these in Romeo at the theatre last night. The door was open, and, passing by, I caught sight of 'em on the back of the chair, and, thinking you out for the night, I—yes, I thought I'd like to try 'em on."

Sobbing bitterly and covering her eyes with her pretty little hands, she continued, "Don't look at me! Ah, don't look at me like that! Let me go, as you are a gentleman—let me go!"

"Without *them*? Impossible, child! I can't go on



the stage without them, so off with 'em. Off with 'em at once!"

"Off wid 'em—and *you* here? Holy Virgin! Oh! it's dying wid shame I'd be!"

"But you must take 'em off, I tell you! I'll go into the next room for five minutes while you arrange—affairs; but you must hurry up, or the stage will be waiting!"

When, five minutes later, I tapped at the door, it was cautiously drawn apart a few inches, and the precious pantaloons were handed out, carefully packed up in a newspaper, and, to be precise, were tied with a green worsted garter (*Honi soit qui mal y pense*).

"Whist! whist! You won't tell on me, will ye?"

"What do you take me for?"

"You don't know—ah, you don't know, or you'd be sorry! but by-and-by I'll tell you—yes, I'll tell you all!"

This little incident cost me a cab, and even then it was with the utmost difficulty that I was in time to begin the comedy.

Next night, as I sat down to tea, a timid tap came at the door, and a gentle voice inquired, "May I come in?"

Although full of apologies, she was very reticent; but I soothed and encouraged her, and at length she told me all. Norah Kavanagh (that was her name) had been staying with some friends at the Curragh of Kildare, where she became acquainted with a military blackguard, who, taking advantage of her

youth and innocence, had lured her to Liverpool. After amusing himself for a fortnight, the fellow had abandoned her like a cast-off garment, and left her to starve. She dared not go home, and for the past few weeks had been living on her watch, her rings, her bracelets, and a few other trinkets. *Tableaux Vivants* were then coming into vogue, and the scoundrel had taken her to see the Keller Troupe in Manchester. When she had got to the last gasp, an advertisement had appeared announcing the advent of the Rudolphys, the famous German pantomimists, in a series of *Tableaux* in Liverpool, and it occurred to her as an inspiration that she might obtain an engagement. Being anxious to know how she would look in *them*, she had ventured to invade my territory, and had actually "got 'em on" when my unexpected return surprised and terrified her. It had become an actual question of bread, for the poor soul had positively not tasted food for two whole days. The moment I heard this I darted off to the nearest cook-shop, returning immediately with something savoury and substantial, which I made her eat. Then she took heart of grace, and begged me to see the Rudolphys on her behalf. As I couldn't bear the idea of this charming, unsophisticated creature being mixed up with this sort of thing, I declined point blank, offering to assist her out of my own slender resources. She returned, however, to the charge again, and yet again; but I remained obdurate. At last she quietly but doggedly intimated that the Mersey was not far off, and she looked as if she meant it, and I verily

believe she did. It has been my misfortune all my life that I never could say "no" to lovely woman. This one was so young, so lovely, and so unfortunate that——

Next day I saw the Rudolchs, found them highly respectable people, and was assured that all their people were equally reputable, and that the baroness, the manager's mother, would look after the girls and see that no loafers would be permitted behind the scenes. I persuaded them that my protégée was Hière, Pallas Athene, and Italian Aphrodite all rolled into one ; and when I introduced her the next day, they came to the same conclusion, with the result that they actually engaged her there and then at five pounds a week, with half salary for rehearsals ! Then came a difficulty : she had to provide "them." They would cost five pounds at least, and she hadn't five pence. However, I succeeded in surmounting that difficulty.

The eventful night arrived. As luck would have it, I was not in the bill, so off I went to see the *Tableaux*. They were all on classical subjects, and were admirably arranged, with appropriate scenery and music. She was the Venus of Milo, with her symmetrical arms restored to her symmetrical body. Besides this, she was the central feature in every group. The limelight—then a new invention—illuminated her superb form with such a celestial radiance that one might have actually thought that the marble majesty of an elder world had been endowed with life. The audience, a large one, composed entirely of men, didn't applaud, but sat rapt in silent admiration.

When the performance was over, I went round behind the scenes.

The baron came up gushing. He couldn't thank me sufficiently, he said. There was a little press supper—quite private and unpretentious. All the girls would be present—most of them were German, and unable to speak a word of English. The function was a novelty—I was curious, and accepted the invitation. Cabs were speedily at the door, and in a few minutes we were conveyed to an hotel in Lime Street, where the gentlemen of the press, who had already been received by Rudolph's acting manager, awaited our arrival. Although a Magyar from Buda-Pesth, the jovial *entrepreneur* spoke English fluently, so did his wife, and they made their guests heartily welcome. Unfortunately neither I nor my friends of the fourth estate knew three words of German. There were, however, two or three Hungarian and Austrian chums of Rudolph's, whose lines fell in pleasant places, for they could patter away to the girls in their native tongue.

Two or three wolves in sheep's clothing, "curled darlings" of the clubs, who had been smuggled in under false pretences, were giving themselves great airs. Evidently these noble youths anticipated a revival of the Eleusinian mysteries, or at least an orgy—in fact, one of them told me so. The supper was solid and substantial, and ample justice was done to it. Afterwards there were whisky and sodas and cigars for the men, and the glorious vintage of champagne (not much) for the girls, who chattered gaily with their compatriots. In consideration of my youth and innocence, the baroness—a rather distinguished

old lady with a nose of abnormal dimensions—took charge of me at one end of the table, while at the other the stalwart baron, a bearded Hercules with a bald head, presided, not without a certain amount of dignity. Midway at the table, on his left, sat Norah, with a couple of the curly youths aforesaid, one on her right, the other on her left, looking ready to devour her. After supper there were toasts in English and toasts in German, with an accompaniment of “Hoch, Hoch, Hoch’s!”

Things were going merrily as marriage bells. The Magyar (who was a magnificent baritone) was intoning a national ballad, apparently familiar to the girls and his countrymen, for they joined in the chorus “Despair not, Magyar!” right lustily, when, to my amazement, Norah sprang to her feet, aflame, and administered to the young gentleman on her right a stinging clout on the ear. With a simultaneous movement, the girls (there were nearly thirty of them) also sprang up. Pausing in his song, and striding over to Norah, Rudolph accosted her in a whisper; she replied in the same key; whereupon, without more ado, the baron took the clouted curly one by the collar of his coat and carried him to the door, and with one dexterous movement deposited him at the bottom of the stairs—fortunately only one flight. The other curly one, like a well-bred dog, seeing preparations made to expedite his departure, took the hint, and followed his friend, without ceremony, while the Magyar, leisurely returning to the head of the table, resumed his song where he had left off, as if not the slightest interruption had occurred.

We of the English contingent were a little fogged at this incident ; but our German friends accepted it as if it were quite a customary occurrence. My curiosity, however, was so excited that I inquired anxiously of the baroness what had happened.

"Oh, nothing," she replied, "save that mine Hermann neffare permif his Frauleins to be insulted !"

By-and-by I asked the bold baron himself, who, offering me a cigar, smiled benignantly and replied, "Better ask the gentleman himself. *He* knows !"

Presently came a toast to the Queen ; then came one to Louis Kossuth ; whereupon we all got up—girls as well as boys—in Scotch fashion, and with one foot on chair, the other on table, we "Hoch-Hoched" to our hearts' content.

Although it was past two o'clock when we broke up, the airy young gentleman who had been so ignominiously ejected, together with his friend and half-a-dozen youths of the same kidney, were mounting guard, cigars in mouth, at the bar. Evidently they expected to get a sight of Norah, for when she emerged, veiled and muffled up to the chin, and when I handed her into a cab, they regarded her with hungry and me with angry eyes. Indeed, it seemed to me as if they emitted an ominous but muffled growl as we drove off.

I hadn't had an opportunity of speaking to her all the evening, nor she to me, so when we got home, pausing at the door, she said, "You haven't told me how I got on to-night ?"

"Haven't I ?"

"No ! How—how did I look ?"

"Oh, beautiful!"

"Did I really?"

"Yes, really! But not half so beautiful as you looked the other night behind the—ahem—curtain!"

"O-o-h!" With that she crimsoned to the eyes and disappeared like a flash of lightning.

For some days I saw no more of her. On inquiry, the landlady told me she felt she must draw the line somewhere, and she didn't think it quite the thing for a poor widow to have *poses plastiques* people in the house, and had therefore given poor Norah notice to quit! She hadn't the faintest idea where the young person lived now; but they would know. "Oh, yes, to be sure! the Rhububs [Rudolphs] would know!"

Although riled at the woman's insolence to my poor protégée, I felt a little hurt at her absenting herself without a word of explanation.

Evidently, however, it pleased her, and as it didn't hurt me I stood aloof, noting that the *Tableaux* had "caught on." Indeed, their success and her beauty were the talk of the town.

At or about this time I renewed my slight acquaintance with Mr. Alexander of Glasgow, whose advent was rendered memorable by a deplorable accident which took place on the occasion of his visit. The play was *The Tempest*. We had reached the end. The stage was crowded; the dainty Ariel soared aërially aloft, singing "Merrily, merrily shall I live now." She had ascended twelve or fifteen feet above our heads, above mine in particular (I was the Ferdinand!), when suddenly the

wire by which she was suspended in the air sagged, and the music ceased. I might have caught her in my arms, had not an idiotic sense of false delicacy instinctively induced me to recoil. In that moment of irresolution the wire snapped, I was too late to save her, and the poor soul fell with a crash, breaking her leg in two places !

Alexander, despite his eccentricity, had a sympathetic heart, and while he remained in Liverpool called daily with his wife to inquire after poor Ariel, always leaving her some little present. He was good enough to offer me an engagement, but we couldn't come to terms, and so the matter fell through.

My appearance in Liverpool began with a row, and my disappearance ended in one. A horrid custom of great antiquity in the circus had been bequeathed by the equestrians to the players, and still flourished at the Amphitheatre. Every new comer was expected to pay his "footing" in the shape of a guinea for "drinks all round." Detesting this sort of blackmail, I declined to comply with the demand ; whereupon I received three different anonymous communications, intimating that if I didn't "own up, measures would be taken to make me !" These menacing missives were all signed "Mother Shawnee"—a grotesque derivative from the French "Marianne." As I remained obdurate, the irate "Mother Shawnee" took action, and one night, when about to don my dress-suit, I found it all but destroyed, and my new dress-boots stuffed with sawdust and horse-dung ! Indignant at this outrage, I flew to Mr. Copeland for redress.



"Do you know who did it?" he inquired.

"I think I do."

"To think is to doubt. Make sure—and when you *are* sure, I give you *carte blanche* to take the law in your own hands!"

"Then by —— I will!"

That night I couldn't sleep. By the morning I had worked myself into a fever. I had reason to suspect there were three persons concerned in this business, and my suspicions were confirmed by what took place on my arrival at rehearsal. When I came on the stage, I was greeted with a yell of derision, and the ringleader, a great hulking six-footer, opened fire with, "So, Mr. Romeo, I understand you've had a visit from Mother Shawnee, after all!"

"Understand! You *know*! only you haven't the pluck to own up."

"Haven't I? Suppose I do own up? What then?"

"What then? Why, put up your hands, you sweep!" and furious with rage I let drive at him.

Unfortunately for him, the stage was on a steep incline, and he had his back to the footlights. As I advanced, he retreated; I landed a score of blows on his face and his head before he knew where he was, and, winding up with one on the point of the jaw, knocked him into the orchestra, where his head cannoned with a thud against a small wooden stool. The moment before I saw blood. Now, when he lay helpless and bleeding, I was stricken with remorse, and was angered with myself and my ungovernable temper. Leaping down to the orchestra and unloosing his cravat, I called for a doctor.

On his arrival he examined the patient.

"Tut, tut!" he growled, "I thought there had been murder or manslaughter at least. The fellow's only stunned. Nothing here that a bit of sticking plaster won't heal. Let me patch him up. There! that'll do. Now send for a cab. Take him home. He'll be all right in an hour or two."

I took the poor beggar home, undressed him, put him to bed, dosed him with brandy, bathed his head, and soothed him to sleep. His wife, a nice little woman, actually thanked me for thrashing her dearly beloved (she had rather a bad time with him), and I came away in an easier frame of mind. The doctor was too optimistic, though. A fall of ten or twelve feet is no joke for a man of sixteen stone, especially if his head comes in contact with a wooden stool. Anyhow, it took poor MacShawnee nearly a week to pull round.

A few days after this occurrence Mr. John Knowles, of the Theatre Royal, and Mr. John Sloan, of the Queen's Theatre, Manchester, were both in Liverpool beating up recruits for their winter season. Both offered me engagements at an increased salary. The former would not, however, ensure me the line of business to which I aspired, while the latter positively guaranteed me the juvenile lead. Closing with this offer, I tendered my resignation to Mr. Copeland.

On the Friday previous to the termination of my engagement, to my astonishment, my friend the enemy came and intimated, on behalf of the company, that a send-off dinner would be given to me on the next Sunday at a tavern in Williamson Square, then kept

by Harry Bolen, the famous pantomimist, for many years after the Mr. Merriman of Drury Lane pantomime.

It may readily be believed that I was touched by this token of good-fellowship.

On Monday morning all or nearly all the boys—and three or four of the girls—came to Lime Street to see me off and wish me good speed, but she was conspicuous by her absence.

Six weeks had elapsed, and I had neither seen nor heard from my protégée. It seems ungenerous to recall, but the “thingamys” had cost five pounds; she was getting that amount weekly, and I was not getting half as much.

To my astonishment I met Sullivan at the station. He too was going to Manchester, and we went together. He was engaged for the leading business at the Theatre Royal, and rightly so, for he was “an older and a better soldier,” with a dozen more years of experience than I possessed. That was the turning-point of his fortune; so it was of mine, only I took the wrong turning, while he took the right one.

When I arrived at the Queen’s Theatre, a large brown paper parcel awaited me in the hall, porter’s lodge. Impatiently tearing it open, I found to my amazement a new and elegant suit of dress-clothes, a stylish pair of dress-boots, and a card inscribed :

“FROM MOTHER SHAWNEE

TO HER REBELLIOUS SON

WITH BEST WISHES FOR HIS SUCCESS.”

## CHAPTER XXI

### *THEATRE ROYAL, MANCHESTER.*

Mr. "Mun be Done"—The Queen's Theatre—Sloan & Co.—*The Battle of Waterloo—The Invasion of Russia—The Dumb Man of Manchester*—"Handsome Bob" and the "Great Mac" in *Van Artevelde*—Wyndham returns to Auld Reekie—George Cruikshank's *Bottle*—Mrs. Wyndham and Preston—A Ghastly Pantomime—*Manchester Mary; or, The Spirit of the Loom*—The City Theatre—Egerton, Sam Emery, and James Browne—My First Acquaintance with Gustavus Brooke—Barry Sullivan buttonholes me in the Snow, with the Result that I take to my Bed and find myself at Death's Door—The Doctor gives me up—I am Booked for "Kingdom Come," when, with the Aid of an Unexpected Friend, I turn the Corner.

THE very day of my arrival in Manchester, I found I had made a grievous mistake in pitching my tent at the Queen's instead of the Royal, inasmuch as the staple commodity at the former house was squalid minor-theatre melodrama, while the latter monopolised the great actors, and was devoted almost entirely to the great works.

It is true that John Knowles (popularly known as "Mr. Mun be Done") was overbearing and autocratic, but the pieces were admirably done, under the direction of Henry Wallack, from whom there was much—indeed, almost everything worth knowing—to be learnt, besides which, salaries were certain, while the theatre (a new and palatial one) was open nearly all the year round.

Sullivan opened with the Keans, in *The Gamester*, and made an immediate mark at Stukeley. I opened in a miserable farce part, in *Honest Thieves*, and made no mark whatever. During the entire season we were condemned to figure in rubbish, in which Mrs. Wyndham (an actress capable of much better things) was being continually led astray by some lordly Lothario. Sometimes I was the aristocratic deluder, though more frequently I was a horny-handed son of the soil, whose mission it was to rescue beauty in distress, and press her to my manly bosom.

Now my heroine was not only a fine woman, but unfortunately she was daily becoming stouter, and as I was still an immature slip of a lad, the conjunction at that particular period with so mature a matron was, to say the least of it, inopportune. However, her ability and my ardour atoned somewhat for the incongruity of the situation, and as she was a great favourite, the audience received us both very kindly.

Most of us lived at Hulme, a couple of miles out in the suburbs, beyond the reach of the omnibus, while the poverty of the land rendered cabs out of the question. This long walk after a hard night's work was very trying for poor Mrs. Wyndham, and, as we were neighbours, I invariably escorted her to the theatre and back home.

To her astonishment and delight, Handsome Bob popped in one day, *en route* to town, to support Macready at the Princesses', in Taylor's forthcoming play *Philip Van Artevelde*.

Bob gave me his part (a bulky one), and asked

me what I thought of it. On carefully plodding through it, I found it consisted of a voluminous series of long messages in verbose blank verse. "'Tis an archaic edition of 'My lord, the carriage waits,' and not worth a tinker's benediction," said I. "Take my advice, send it back to town by next post, and return to Edinburgh by the next train."

"No!" replied he, "I shall stick to my colours, and must go through with it now."

But he didn't, for at rehearsal the part proved even worse than I had anticipated.

Fortunately for Master Bob, Murray had not released him from his engagement. On the contrary, for a whole month he was underlined for Selbourne (a long and unprofitable part in *A Roland for an Oliver*). Finding that his boat was not burnt behind him, Bob went back to Edinburgh, ate the leek (*i.e.* swallowed Selbourne), and ultimately succeeded Murray in the management of the National Theatre.

We were quite a happy family in Manchester. Sloan (a capital actor of Irish comedy) was *bon camarade* and one of ourselves. His wife, too, was a charming, fairy-like little thing, and did all she could to make things agreeable.

*The Battle of Waterloo* was produced by Mr. Broadfoot, who came direct from Astley's for the purpose. Mr. Preston, our leading man, as Napoleon, and Sloan as Molly Maloney (a horse marine of an Irish *vivandière*), distinguished themselves so highly, and the production was so beneficial to the treasury, that Sloan was induced

to follow it up with another equestrian drama entitled *The Invasion of Russia*, which proved as disastrous to him as it did to the Little Corporal himself.

Then came *The Dumb Man of Manchester*, in which Broadfoot was said to imitate his brother-in-law, Andrew Ducrow, faithfully. Anyhow, it was a splendid piece of pantomime, and, indeed, the only thing from which I learnt anything during the entire season. I made an elaborate study of it, and annexed and eventually incorporated it in one of my own popular dramas.

Try, however, what we might, we couldn't attract the public. When the fortunes of the theatre were at the lowest ebb, we "struck ile" with *The Bottle*—a gruesome drama founded on George Cruikshank's famous illustrations.

In one respect this was one of the most remarkable *tours de force* ever witnessed in a theatre. Of course, the plates were to be had everywhere; consequently the *Tableaux*, with appropriate music, were most perfectly and admirably realised. The scenery was painted, the costumes prepared; but unfortunately we couldn't get the play itself till within forty-eight hours of the production! It is astounding, however, what can be done when people make up their minds to do a thing. Except myself, the company were all experienced and accomplished artists; hence the play was actually acted without a hitch, and was received on the first night with an enthusiasm which, to use the hackneyed phrase, literally beggars description.

The drunkard was enacted by Mr. Preston (who had been Vandenhoff's rival in Manchester), and Mrs.

Wyndham was more than admirable in the drunkard's wife ; indeed, I can conceive of nothing, even in the very highest branch of art, superior to these two remarkable performances. The excitement was extraordinary ; even the actors stood at the wings and wept like children (I was one of the most lachrymose of the crowd). After Preston's mad scene it was no unfrequent thing for women and children, and even grown men, to be carried out of the auditorium fainting. It was said (with what degree of truth I know not) that the Temperance movement in Manchester was much benefited by the production of this lurid work. Be that as it may, crowds swarmed at the doors, and even as early as four o'clock in the afternoon.

Seeing what was afterwards done with *Drink* in London, it is my firm conviction that, had this remarkable performance been transferred to the West End, the play would have gone for twelve months, perhaps two or three years. As it was, it ran with us for twelve weeks, and night after night as many people were turned away as got inside the building.

During this sensational movement, Isabella Glyn made her first appearance on the stage, at the Royal, as Constance (*King John*), under the auspices of Charles Kemble, but failed to excite interest. Mr. W. L. Davenport and Mrs. Cora Mowatt, from America, also made their first appearance in England at the Theatre Royal, but were equally unfortunate, in consequence of our phenomenal success. At or about this time, a large circus was converted into a popular theatre by Mr. Egerton, and opened with *Gustavus Brooke*, Sam Emery,



and James Browne, assisted by a numerous and efficient company.

Immediately prior to their opening, Mr. Edward Stirling came to us with a pot-boiling drama, vamped up for the occasion yclept (save the mark!) *Manchester Mary*; or, *The Spirit of the Loom!* Mrs. Wyndham was Mary, and I was her lover, all rags and wretchedness. Our parts were mere shadows; the substance Stirling had reserved for himself in a kind of enlarged Newman Nogg, supposed to be my father. This imbecile tatterdemalion had "left his country for his country's good," but came back proprietor of a Californian gold-mine, seeking "his long-lost cheyld." We met in the street. I think I had to ask him to buy a box of matches. Some mysterious chord of memory appeared to strike him. He inquired whether I had a strawberry mark on my left arm, to which I responded, "Why, certainly!"

He replied, "And I have another."

In a burst of filial emotion I exclaimed, "Then you are, you must be, my long lost father!"

"I yam, I yam!" he answered, as we rushed into each other's arms; or, rather, we should have done, had not my foot unfortunately slipped on a piece of orange peel, with the result that my long lost parent was landed on his back and I on his—digestive apparatus! The effect was so striking that the audience actually wished to encore it. Although we declined to comply with this request, we made up our minds to amend that "business" the following night, but, alas! I never had the chance, for that was my first and last appearance in *Manchester Mary*.

Returning homeward that night, I looked in at the new city theatre, where I encountered James Browne and Barry Sullivan, and adjourned with them to the tavern immediately opposite. Our principal topic of conversation was the arrest of Brooke as he was going on the stage the preceding night. It was his benefit, and his last appearance prior to his opening at the Olympia, where he was announced for Othello, and Egerton had been obliged to get him out of durance to enable him to keep faith with the public.

While discussing this incident, a row was heard outside, and a fine handsome fellow entered the room in animated altercation with a cabman about his fare. The stranger was fair complexioned, with an oval face, fair hair, and blue eyes. He stood about five feet ten or higher, was broad-chested, straight as a dart, and apparently was about thirty or five-and-thirty years of age. His dress was peculiar to eccentricity. He wore a drab cloth overcoat with a cape, a large blue silk muffler was twisted carelessly round his neck, and a white hat was perched on one side of his head. Although I had never seen him in my life, I felt instinctively this must be Brooke. I was not left long in doubt, for when he came to our end of the room, Sullivan introduced us to each other; whereupon Gustavus burst out in the most delicious Dublin brogue, "Arrah, now, you're not afther havin' such a thing as a strhawberry mark on your left arm, have you? Tare and ages, I thought you'd knocked the life out of that owld geeser's body just now! And so you're young Coleman? Glad to know you, my boy."

What a delightful time we had of it, we four, till we broke up, about two in the morning. Wishing Brooke a great success in town, and bidding Browne "good-night," Barry and I walked home together. He had been acting with Macready, Helen Faucit, the Keans, the Vandenhooffs, and had, so he said, "Towered above them all." He was dying to unburthen himself on the subject, and this was the first opportunity.

The weather was simply awful, the snow had turned to a hard frost, and there was a black fog you might have cut with a knife. I ought not to have been out at all on such a night, but we actors are hyper-sensitive about our "placeful triumphs," and desirous of humouring an old comrade, I indiscreetly stayed and listened to Sullivan's yarns till the cold struck to my vitals; then, staggering home, I went shivering to bed, from which I never rose for seven or eight weeks!

My doctor (a rare good fellow) pronounced my malady inflammation of the lungs, and, solemnly assuring me that my left lung was gone altogether, adjured me to send for my friends without delay. For three weeks of dreary days and sleepless nights I lay, expecting every succeeding moment to be my last.

At last we reached New Year's eve, and the morrow would be my eighteenth and probably my last birthday. The bells rang joyously while people were seeing the old year out. I saw the new year in, but never dared to hope that I should see it out.

The morning (for it was morning now) dragged its weary length along until its gloomy horrors seemed as if they would "stretch out till the crack of doom."

Day broke through the dark, and changed to dawn. As hour followed hour I fancied that each succeeding one would prove my last.

Although 'twas high noon (for I heard the clock strike twelve), the sun still struggled, but struggled in vain, with the mist and the fog. The mid-day chimes had scarce died away, when a cab drove up, and there came a tremendous "rat-tat-tat" at the door, followed by the sound of an impatient and imperative feminine voice—a rapid but light footstep on the stair, the frou-frou of a woman's dress. The next moment Norah burst into the room, swooped down on me, gathered me up in her arms, pressed me to her bosom in a great passion of tears and tenderness, and I remember nothing more.

How long I remained unconscious I never knew. It might have been five minutes or it might have been five days. Enough that when I returned to myself there was a regular transformation scene. The curtain was drawn up, the window opened, the blessed sunshine penetrated and filled every nook and cranny of my squalid chamber. There were roses, roses here, there, everywhere! Roses in basins, roses in teacups and saucers, and roses on my bed and on my pillow. A bottle of "fizz" and a plate of soup were on the table, and Norah was bathing my forehead with Eau de Cologne. Then she made me drink a glass of wine, fed me with soup, plucked the grapes, and dropped them one by one in my mouth, as though I were a baby.

I couldn't speak ; hence she had to do all the talking.

She dreamt, she said, that I was dying, and made up her mind to come and see for herself. God knows how she knew it, but she *did* know that I was a new year's gift.

"And so it's your birthday to-day, Ma Bonchaleen Bawn? And how owld is it you are?"

"You won't give me away if I tell you?" I gasped.

"No indeed! Why would I?"

"Well, you see, I've been obliged to put on a year or two, and, whist! I'm only eighteen!"

"Sure it's big enough for a man you are, and, faith, your heart is big enough for a dozen o' thim. Why, it's quite an owld woman I am to you, for it's nineteen I am this blessed day!"

"Then to-day's your birthday, too?"

"Yes, indeed, this day of all others; and if it hadn't been for you, it's keepin' it in the mud at the bottom of the Mersey I'd have been this blessed minute, and so I thought—yes, I thought——"

What she thought I don't know, for I fell fast asleep there and then.

When I awoke next morning, I found she had returned to Liverpool and wouldn't be back till Sunday—so at least the landlady said, as she handed me an envelope containing five golden sovereigns, with the inscription, "For the thingamys!"

The woman eyed the coins wolfishly.

"I suppose you'll pay me now?" she said.

"Oh, certainly!" and I handed her the envelope and its contents.

"That's all right! And, oh, sir, the young madam told me to say the baron's a-comin' to the Free Trade 'All with the posies next week, and she'll be able to look after you herself till you find your feet; and it's precious glad I am of it, for it's a lot of looking after you want just now."

When Sunday came, Norah returned, accompanied by the baron and the baroness. My lady also brought a bundle of fruit and flowers from "the family," she said, while the baron ordered dinner from the hotel. They made me eat a mouthful or two and drink a glass or two of wine, and stirred me up a little.

The *Tableaux* made a great hit, and Norah's beauty a greater! She was, however, unremitting in her attention to me; but my extreme debility and irritability made me a difficult person to deal with. Besides, I began to hear rumours about her numerous admirers which set me thinking. I began to note, too, with disquietude her elegant toilette, which appeared somewhat over elaborate for a mere *figurante* in the *Tableaux Vivants*.

"How did she get them?" I inquired querulously of the baroness.

She replied ambiguously, and that set me on fire. When Norah came in—an hour later—she inquired sweetly, "Well, and how are you getting on?"

"Oh, I'm all right! Getting up to-morrow; and when I do, you'd better go home!"

"Home is no home since mother died!" she replied curtly.

"She is dead, then?"

"Yes! And I killed her!"

“Killed her!”

“Father says so; and if I were to go back, he’d kill me!”

“Well, you can only die once, and better that, than the life you are leading now!”

“What do you mean?”

“What I say.”

“Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself—and you shall never have the chance of saying it again! There!”

With that she turned and left the room, slamming the door after her as she turned pale with anger.

A week, a whole week elapsed, and I neither saw nor heard of her. On the strength of the success in Liverpool and Manchester, the baron told me he had arranged for a Continental tour, commencing at the Hofburg Theatre, Vienna. He had obtained fabulous terms, and salaries were to be increased all round—Norah’s especially. He had been mixed up in the Kossuth business, and banished; but an amnesty had been proclaimed, and he was returning in triumph to the Fatherland. It was not for nothing he had sung “Despair not, Magyar!”

Everything was arranged for his departure and that of his little family of thirty on the morrow; hence he and the baroness came to make their adieux.

“Come and see us in Hungary at our estate, for we shall get it back, shall we not, Hermann?” inquired the baroness.

“That is as the gude Gott vills it; but estate or no estate, we shall always be glad to see our excellent

gute friend and comrade; so make you haste, mein herr, to get better, and when Richard is, vot you call it, himself again, he is sure of a warm welcome in Hungary. So good-bye," and he beslobbered me on both cheeks after their Continental fashion; while madame (who was a sensible woman, and knew how to kiss a man) kissed me properly and dropped a pearly tear or two; so did I.

I made sure that Norah would also have called to say good-bye, but she didn't—the barbarous, ungrateful hussy!

A month elapsed; then both theatres closed, friends were scattered to the four corners of England, and I was still confined to my bed. Rent had to be paid, food and physic to be obtained. First went my watch, next my paste ornaments, lastly the wardrobe obtained by such abstinence and self-denial.

At length I had reached my last shilling—when, lo! there came a registered letter from Buda-Pesth, addressed to me at the Theatre Royal. Tom Chambers, the manager, signed for it, and sent it on to me by the call-boy. Buda-Pesth! Who could be writing to me from there? As I tore open the letter, out fluttered a Bank of England note for fifty pounds, and these three words, "With Norah's love," written in a great scrawling hand on a sheet of notepaper. So then the hussy was not barbarous or ungrateful after all! But how did she come by so large a sum? That was the question which exercised my mind. Had she sent her address, I would most certainly have returned the



money. But she hadn't sent her address or even a clue to it.

Another month elapsed ; my landlady offered me " the key of the street." Starvation stared me in the face, and—and—yes ! that fifty pounds went the way of all other fifty pounds, but it saved my life.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *RICHARD IS HIMSELF AGAIN*

Rodgers to the Rescue—Ruralising—Stafford—The Vandenhoffs—G. V. Brooke and Charles Dillon—Newport and Ludlow—An Untoward Incident—Refusing to pay "Toll" and what came of it—Indignation and Hysteria—Hereford, the Author of *Ion*, and Captain Popham—A Useful Object Lesson—Lichfield and the Yeomen—A Commonwealth and the President thereof—Return Visit to Newport—Owen *Père et Fils*—Harry Byron and Oliver Twist—A Midnight Journey to Wrexham—The Pugnacious Pug—"Two Lovely Black Eyes!"—Chester Races and Romeo's Wig—I begin with Mercutio and, after my Death, come to Life again as Romeo—Return to Liverpool—My First Engagement as Leading Man!

AT this critical period James Rodgers concluded to tempt fortune in the dog-days by commencing the managerial career which ultimately led to his being permanently and prosperously located at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, Birmingham. Our rivalry in Liverpool had led to some little friction, hence I was not a little surprised to receive a proposal from him to join him at once at Stafford for the juvenile business and light comedy. The salary was a summer one; but "half a loaf is better than no bread"—besides which, Jimmy not only guaranteed my "line of business," but offered me some leading parts, and threw out a hint that he was in treaty for a Liverpool theatre, where he proposed to make me his leading man. I rose to the bait, accepted the proposal at once, and next day was on

my way to Stafford, where I opened as Romeo to a crowded house and a somewhat mature Juliet.

Here, methinks, I hear the incredulous reader exclaim, "A Romeo without lungs! How did you get on without the lung the doctor averred you had lost in Manchester?"

I reply, "If I really did lose it, I've managed to get on very well without it for nearly half a century—perhaps that is because I have a voice with two octaves." *Apròpos* of which, an amusing story used to be told of the late Huntly May Macarthy (an eccentric Irish manager), who had the Sheffield theatre when Charles Dillon and I were alternating Othello and Iago there in the long ago. The first night I enacted Othello, Macarthy was in the front. At the end of the third act, he was heard to exclaim, "Lost one lung, has he? Lord be praised for small mercies then, for divil a theatre in the kingdom would be safe if he'd got *two* o' them! It's afeared I am, even now, that he'll bring the roof down about our ears this blessed night; then what'll become o' me, I'd like to know? The killed and wounded'll go agen me for damages, and those that are left will want their money back!"

Long after, when I had become a "star," as we say, at the theatre, I was acting *Damon and Pythias* in Manchester to a house crowded to overflowing; even the private boxes were packed like herrings in a barrel. The audience was enthusiastic, and one auditor in the private box to my right was too enthusiastic. This was a large Newfoundland dog, who insisted upon accentuating every round of applause

emitted by his master with a chorus of full-throated approbation which evoked roars of laughter. As this was rather rough on Damon, I sent for the manager, and insisted upon the removal of this too appreciative animal. The faithful brute wouldn't stir without his master, who turned out to be the very identical doctor who had booked me for "kingdom come" twenty years before! Just three more words about that "lost lung," and then hey for Stafford! When recently at Drury Lane, I was easily heard at the back of the gallery, and still more recently, the other day, when acting Pericles at Stratford-on-Avon, thank God my voice was as sonorous as ever.

Nothing of note occurred during the season at Stafford except the production of *The Bottle*, in which I tried to emulate the excellent example of my friend Preston; and although I failed to satisfy myself, the audience were apparently satisfied, and the piece attracted crowded houses for half-a-dozen nights.

Then came the Vandenhoffs with *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and *Love's Sacrifice*, in all of which I got a "look in" as Iago, Bassanio, Laertes, and Eugene de Lorme.

On M. Vandenhoff's benefit night, to my amazement this veteran of threescore and ten, this type of almost obsolete classical tragedy, essayed the part of Young Wilding in *The Liar* with an airiness and a vivacity which Charles Mathews at his best never excelled; while to my own astonishment I actually acquitted myself creditably in Papillon.

The following week Gustavus Brooke (after his

triumph at the Olympic) was announced for Othello at Wolverhampton, then under the management of Charles Dillon and Harry Widdicombe, and, having "a night off," we chartered a drag, in which the whole body corporate (girls and boys) drove over to Wolverhampton where we were received with open arms both by Brooke, Dillon, and Widdicombe.

There was a crowded house and an enthusiastic audience. Much as I liked Brooke, personal predilection has never yet blinded my judgment, and the Othello of Othellos, unapproached and unapproachable, still remained Edwin Forrest. It must be admitted, however, that before Brooke lost his voice (that noble, matchless organ!), his was an admirable and inspiring performance. One effect, indeed—the famous, "Oh Fool—Fool—Fool!" was never equalled in his time, and has certainly never been excelled since. Dillon, then in his prime, was a dashing Mephistophelean Gascon of an Iago; F. B. Egan was the beau ideal of Michael Cassio, "framed to make women false"; Widdicombe a delightfully droll Roderigo; while Mrs. Dillon (Clara Conquest) made a charming Desdemona; Emilia, I'm ashamed to say, I've forgotten.

When the play was over, Brooke, Dillon, and Mrs. Dillon, Widdicombe, Egan, and the rest of the Wolverhampton company entertained us right royally at the Peacock, ere they sent us on our way rejoicing in "the wee small hours ayont the twal."

For my benefit at Stafford I exploited myself as Julian St. Pierre (*The Wife*), and Ruy Gomez (*Faint Heart*)

*Never Won Fair Lady*), and, better still, cleared five or six pounds by the exploitation.

Our next hunting-ground was the adjacent town of Newport, where (as there was no theatre) we had to act in a large hall. Our appliances were rather primitive, but we played to full houses and appreciative audiences, and I was permitted to attempt *Othello*, *Master Walter*, and similar parts—I fear beyond my reach. From here we went to Ludlow, which I remember principally by the ruins of the castle, where Milton's *Comus* was originally produced, and from the fact that here I enacted Lemuel, in *The Flowers of the Forest*, to the Starlight Bess of the ebulliently beautiful Miss Beauregard. When I state that I was then supposed to be the beau ideal of the gypsy boy—originally acted by Bella Woolgar—the reader may be enabled to form some idea of my then much too juvenile appearance for the heavier range of tragedy.

On this occasion a most untoward incident occurred. The afterpiece was an absurd trifle called *Blue Jackets*, in which Miss Beauregard and her equally beautiful sister had to don the unmentionables and board a ship in the guise of sailors. Their disguise is speedily discovered by the real salts, who overhaul the “gels” and make them “pay toll” for their intrusion in the shape of a kiss. The gypsy boy of the first piece, in the last was supposed to be transformed into a grizzled, weather-beaten old tar, who, when he discovered the sex of the younger Miss Beauregard, had to overhaul her and take the “toll” aforesaid.

Now it was my misfortune, from some inexplicable

cause, to have given offence to this young lady, and she not only refused to pay "toll," but dashed off the stage. Without her we couldn't end the piece, so I followed in pursuit. She remained refractory and obdurate ; hence a little (a very little) coercion became necessary to bring her to the scratch. With one arm round her waist and the other grasping her hand, I administered a little gentle persuasion, when, to my horror, she screamed out at the top of her voice, "Wretch ! you've dislocated my shoulder !" and down she dropped in hysterics.

To my amazement and consternation her sister, rushing to the footlights, exclaimed, "Ladies and gentlemen, it is impossible to finish the play, because this monster has torn my poor sister's arm out of joint !"

At this cruel accusation I sprang forward, and, plucking off my iron-grey wig and beard, exclaimed, "Behold the monster, ladies and gentlemen ! Do you think he looks monstrous enough to put a woman's arm out of joint ?"

In reply there came a unanimous shout of, "No, lad ! no, no !"

"The lady's arm is *not* out of joint," I continued, "but her temper unfortunately *is*, and I fear I am the unhappy but innocent cause of her distemper. Although I may say, with Hamlet,

The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right !

yet, if you'll be graciously pleased to allow us to drop the curtain, I'll do my best 'to set it right !'"

When the curtain descended I found I had two on my hands instead of one, for the elder sister had also flopped into violent hysterics, and both lay prone upon the stage. Unhappily they had rendered themselves so obnoxious to the ladies of the company that their sympathies were entirely on my side, and they positively declined to render the slightest assistance. Fortunately, at this moment Rodgers turned up with a doctor, who, having felt the ladies' pulses, chuckled, which I thought rather unsympathetic.

"Clear the stage!" said he brusquely. "Now, brandy, Rodgers, quick!"

Off went Rodgers for the Cognac, while the doctor requested me to bear a hand!

It was easy to say "bear a hand," but sixteen stone of inert adipose tissue (and the elder sister was all that, if she was an ounce) was no joke. However, we succeeded in bearing the fainting fair to their dressing-room.

"What's to be done?" I inquired.

"Just get this unwomanly coat and this beastly jacket off without bursting the buttons, if you can."

No sooner said than done.

"What next?"

"Why, cut stay-laces, of course."

Stay-laces were cut, to the immediate relief of the sufferers. Then Rodgers returned with the brandy, and I was bundled out with injunctions to get a cab. Unfortunately we could not get one for love or money. Luckily, however, a bath chair was in the theatre, which was requisitioned to convey my fair but fractious colleagues to their lodgings.



Next day they left for Liverpool and we for a delightful drive to Hereford by coach.

It was the assize week ; the little city was all alive with visitors, and the little theatre was crowded nightly. Rodgers played First Robber at the Box Office, while I played Don Felix, Charles Surface, Young Rapid, Young Marlowe, Don Cæsar, Sir Charles Coldstream, O'Callaghan, and Captain Popham in *The Eton Boy*. In this last precious piece of buffoonery I had to exhibit myself in petticoats—an exhibition always odious to me, but in this case more than usually detestable, in consequence of its hateful but abnormal success.

Little things please little minds, and every movement, every gesture, every look elicited roars of laughter and round after round of applause. The bucolic boobies who had yawned or gone to sleep over Young Rapid and Young Marlowe, to my intense mortification, went into convulsions of delight over the asinine absurdities of the idiotic Popham.

Next day, after discovering and exploring Garrick's birthplace, while strolling down the High Street I was accosted by an elderly gentleman in a barrister's wig and gown.

"Pardon the intrusion," said he, "but I am an old London play-goer, and have been to the theatre every night. Sir, there is a future before you, if you steer clear of Captain Popham and such epicene creatures. Another success of that kind may prove fatal to your career."

"Never, sir ! for I loathe the beast and all his tribe !" I replied somewhat hotly.

"Glad to hear it! Stick to that, sir, and you'll get there! How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"Ever seen Macready?"

"Yes—in nearly everything."

"Ever seen him in *my* play?"

"Yours!"

"Yes, *Ion*!"

"*Ion*! then you are——?"

"Yes, I'm Talfourd. I'd like to see you in *Ion*."

"I'd like to see myself, sir."

"Well, perhaps you will by-and-by. By Jove! I'm keeping the court waiting! Like to see *me* act? Well, come along. See you in London one of these days. Good-bye, good luck! But, mind, no more Pophams!"

That flying visit to Hereford has always left a sweet memory, because it was there that for the first, last, and only time I ever encountered the great advocate (not then a judge) whose definition of the grand old word "Gentleman" is the purest, noblest, most comprehensive tribute to manliness in the English language. Alas! he did not live to see me in London; but his son Frank told me that his father had often told him that he would like to see *Ion* enacted by the young actor whom he had seen at Hereford in *Don Cæsar* and *Don Felix*.

From Hereford we went to Lichfield, the birthplace of Samuel Johnson, of Archer, and Aimwell; of Mrs. Sullen and her surly spouse, of Scrub and Cherry, of Foigard and of Boniface, who had added another

synonym to our vocabulary before "Mrs. Grundy" was heard of. It was the Yeomanry week, and I monopolised the honours nightly, minus Captain Popham, against whom I struck, and whom I have never attempted since. At the end of this visit Rodgers had to go to Liverpool to prepare for his forthcoming season; hence our present engagement terminated, and as we had to fill out some five or six weeks as best we could, we formed a commonwealth of which I was elected president. Then we decided upon a return trip for a fortnight to Newport, where we had formerly done so well. Meanwhile, Mr. George Owen (who had been with us in Stafford) had taken the Wrexham and Chester theatres for a flying visit in each town, and he now invited some eight or ten of us to join him.

His father, Mr. Owen, senior, had occupied an important position in the India House, whence he derived a comfortable pension. His wife, formerly Miss Beaumont, was a remarkably fine woman (a little too *prononcée*) and an accomplished vocalist during the Charles Kemble *régime* at Covent Garden. At an early age her son acquired theatrical tastes, not only from his mother, but from his father, who was an inveterate play-goer and an intimate friend of Charles Kemble. Profoundly impressed with his boy's ability, Owen *père* endeavoured to exploit him in the small country towns as a second edition of the famous Master Betty, the juvenile Roscius. Besides this, he was the original Oliver Twist at the Surrey, where his father was always believed to be the original of Quilp, to whom, indeed, the old gentleman bore an all too striking resemblance.

I once took the liberty of asking "the master" if this were really the case. He laughingly replied, "You want to know too much, young man."

Long after the period of which I am now speaking, George Owen became manager of the York circuit, the Dublin, Leicester, Southampton, and other theatres. The dear old chap, though not a brilliant, was a sensible and intelligent actor, the soul of honour, and a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He had inherited little of his mother's comeliness, but unfortunately he had enough and to spare of his father's gaucherie and restlessness. In conversation he had acquired an awful habit of crossing his arms and nursing his elbows in his hands, while he kept squirming and twisting his body to and fro in a most erratic manner. To strangers this was not only embarrassing but irritating.

One night, while supping with Harry Byron at the Albion, George came up to our box and entered into conversation with me, nursing his elbows and squirming and twisting his body even more than usual. When he went away, Byron eagerly inquired, "Who is that mysterious old fellow?"

"George Owen," I replied.

"Oh, indeed! don't know him."

"Not know George Owen? That is to argue yourself unknown!"

"It's my misfortune never to have even heard of him!"

"Why, man, he was a juvenile prodigy before we left school!"

"Was he really?"

"Yes! he was the original Oliver Twist at the Surrey."

"By Jove! then that accounts for it!"

"Accounts for what?"

"Why, for his being 'All of a Twist' ever since!"

We had a hard struggle to make both ends meet at Newport; but we escaped by the skin of our teeth, paid everything and everybody, and had a trifle to the good. We closed on the Monday, and were to open at Wrexham on the following night.

There was no mail or railway communication between these places in those days, hence it became necessary to charter two huge waggons and four horses to carry us and our belongings. The lesser vehicle I had fitted up with rugs, cushions, carpet bags, and smaller impedimenta for the ladies, while the larger one was devoted to ourselves.

To enable us to reach Wrexham in time for the opening on Tuesday, it was absolutely essential to make a start almost directly we had finished, and to travel all Monday night. A hot supper was ordered at the hotel at twelve o'clock, and the cars were to be at the door at half-past one punctually. The performance consisted of *The Honey-moon* and *His Last Legs*, and Owen had arranged for us to open with the same programme at Wrexham. Having to play the Duke and O'Callaghan, I had a very anxious time of it. My anxieties were enhanced by the attitude of those members of the company who had not been engaged by Owen, and who, having arrived at the conclusion that they ought to have been included in the invitation, were very wroth at being left in the cold. I

had exerted all my powers of persuasion in endeavouring to induce Owen to engage the poor beggars, but he remained obdurate, alleging he did not want "more cats than would catch mice."

During the first piece the malcontents had been imbibing not enough to make them drunk, but more than enough to make them bold, and while I was hastily slipping into my dress for O'Callaghan, "Pug" (as we called the ringleader, from his Simian frontispiece) swaggered into my dressing-room and accused me of treachery in deserting him and his "pals." It was in vain I assured him that they were mistaken. Then I pointed out that the stage was waiting, and begged him at any rate to leave me to get dressed and to postpone further discussion to the end of the performance. The drink, however, had mounted to his head, he became aggressively insolent, and reflected on a lady's name in connection with mine, with the result that the next minute he was on his back, embellished with two black eyes. In my insensate rage I had literally blinded him. In an instant the room was crowded with our comrades, male and female, and poor "Pug" was carried into the inn next door, where one of the steaks intended for our supper was made into a poultice for his unfortunate eyes, while I struggled into my coat and got through O'Callaghan as well as I could under the circumstances.

When the performance was over, I rushed round to see how the poor beggar was getting on, and found him lying on the sofa, while the Duchess (Juliana) was bathing his eyes. When I began to apologise, he heaped coals of fire on my head.

"Not another word ! Serves me right ! It was all my fault," he gasped. "But, oh, my poor eyes ! and you're all off in an hour—and I'm going to be left alone in this God-forsaken hole !" and he began to howl.

"You're going to be nothing of the kind ! You're coming along with us," I replied.

"You don't mean it ?"

"I do, though."

"I don't deserve it !"

"Stuff ! rubbish ! not another word ! The Duchess will take care of you, while one of the boys will look after your traps. So ta-ta ! keep up your pecker, old man."

After five minutes' talk with the boys and girls before supper, a committee of ways and means was formed, and there and then it was unanimously resolved to take the malcontents to Wrexham, and divide the expense amongst us. I think we enjoyed our supper all the better for this little arrangement. I am sure "Pug" did, for he ate as heartily as any one, and settled down to his pipe with a will. When we came to make a start, the ladies insisted on having him in their cart, and the very girl of whom he had spoken slightly (poor dear ! she never knew it) nursed his broken head and his black eyes in her lap till we got to Wrexham, when I took him to my lodgings, where he stayed with me till we got to Chester.

*Apropos* of which, a rather ludicrous incident occurred during our visit to that city.

In addition to other physical drawbacks, from childhood upwards poor George Owen had "no hair on

the top of his head in the place where the wool ought to grow," and consequently always wore a wig. On our last night, while "taking the measure of an unmade grave" in *Romeo*, off came his peruke, disclosing a cranium as destitute of hirsute adornment as the egg of an ostrich. A gentleman of the racing fraternity, who with his friends occupied a prominent place in a private box abutting on the stage, hooked up the unfortunate jazey with his whip, and handed it over to the occupants of the adjacent box, who in their turn passed it on to their neighbours, till it went the rounds of the dress circle amidst a succession of roars. There was nothing for it but to drop the curtain, while Mr. Owen, senior, went round to the front to try to get back the precious peruke. His appeals were, however, unheeded, and, since poor George hadn't another wig, there was a deadlock. We were at our wits' end, and knew not what to do.

In this emergency a luminous idea occurred to the elder Owen.

"Hi! here, young shaver!" he exclaimed, addressing me. "You're *Mercutio*! Dead! dead as a door nail. D——d good job, too! Off you go! Slip on another dress, and finish *Romeo*!"

No sooner said than done, and little as the reader may be impressed with the Shakespearian culture of the racing fraternity of Chester, thanks to the beauty and ability of the lovely Emmeline Montague and the red-hot fervour and (shall I say?) the amatory ardour of her promptly improvised *Romeo*, the concluding acts of the play were never received with more enthusiasm.



After this memorable night, I had to say good-bye to Chester with its cosy theatre, built out of the old Abbey ruins, good-bye to its splendid piazza, good-bye to dear old George, and, above all, good-bye to my beautiful Juliet, who has since brought forth a race of Romeos and Juliets inheriting their father, Henry Compton's, brains and their mother's beauty.

*Apropos* of beauty, one of my new acquaintances in Rodgers' company at Liverpool was a veritable "daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair!" She was a frank, outspoken girl, with no nonsense or affectation about her, and we became chums at once. She told me her father had been a brewer in a large way at Tooting, where he failed and committed suicide, leaving herself, her mother, and sister utterly unprovided for. The two girls had to turn out to get a living—the elder as a governess, the younger (herself) as an actress. She had had some little experience as an amateur; beyond that and her *bonhomie*, she had little to recommend her save beauty. She had a mother to support, who did not accept her fallen fortunes with equanimity, and was under the impression that the blood of the Smythes (her maiden name, spelt, if you please, with a "y" and an "e") was degraded by contact with the stage. Poor soul! she knew no better, and the people of the stage pitied her ignorance and tolerated her bad manners for her daughter's sake, and possibly because she was still a monstrous fine woman, barely turned six and thirty. Indeed, she looked a buxom elder sister to a bouncing girl of eighteen. There was said to be a "guardian"

somewhere, who "moved in mysterious ways his wonders to perform." What he had to guard I don't know, unless it was his ward's beauty, and madame *mère* looked pretty sharply after that.

Rodgers kept his word, and gave me all the leading business, and I began to come to the fore. Fortunately my lifelong friend John Chute was in the company, and he gave me Richard to play, or rather to attempt, for his benefit. Incredible as it may appear, I actually enacted Jerry in *Tom and Jerry* afterwards. The splendid audacity of youth is amazing. Imagine a boy of eighteen daring to attempt a *tour de force* of this kind, and being tolerated—nay, even received with favour in an almost metropolitan city.

A friend of Chute's and a resident professor of music, Mr. Bishop (father of Alfred Bishop and his accomplished sister), came nightly to our theatre, and saw my crude efforts. The two friends appreciated my conscientiousness, and sympathised with my ambitious aspirations, so they put their heads together, and, without even consulting me, communicated with James Chute and Mrs. Macready, with the result that I was engaged for the leading business at Bath and Bristol! Here was a stride indeed! only eighteen, and principal tragedian of two of the first theatres in the kingdom!

I have never forgotten how much I am indebted for whatever success I have since attained to those dear, kind friends. One of them has been my representative on and off for years, and the very first person I engaged during my recent management of Drury Lane was Mr. John Chute, who toiled early

and late for me with a devotion which put younger men in my employment to shame.

Another friend of my youth, a young Caledonian, whose acquaintance I made in his native city of Edinburgh, and who has since acquired world-wide though dubious celebrity, came to Liverpool, and chummed with me till I left for Bristol, when he journeyed with me as far as Birmingham. There we hugged and wept and parted, and from that day to this I have never met or seen Daniel Douglas Home.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *THE YOUTHFUL TRAGEDIAN OF BATH AND BRISTOL*

AN Eccentric Manageress—I fail ignominiously in Richard at Bristol on Monday, and succeed triumphantly in Bath on Saturday—Art *v.* Artifice—Becalmed in a Fog in the Bristol Channel—Cardiff—*Romeo and Juliet*—Before a Garden of Girls—Return to Bristol—Alfred Wigan—The Hidalgo de “L’Espagne” wins his Wager and pays for the Dinner—End of my First Season at Bristol.

AFTER a long and fatiguing journey, not in a tub, but still very “tubby,” I arrived in Bath at two or three in the morning. John Chute awaited my arrival, and took me home to his diggin’s, where a supper was prepared. He plied me with hot potations, over which I fell asleep, and had to be packed off to bed.

Next day he introduced me to his brother, then manager of the historic Assembly Rooms over which Beau Nash had formerly presided. James Chute was a great strapping, handsome fellow in those days, brusque, but frank and engaging. He was married to the daughter of my new manageress, Mrs. Macready, widow of the great Mac’s father, and an eccentric old lady, whose origin was shrouded in mystery.

When the elder Macready, then a widower, settled in

Bristol, a highly attractive lady, who had been a governess, kept house for him and his family. Both he and his son William were fascinated with her beauty and accomplishments. This fatal fascination led to a series of misunderstandings between father and son, and resulted in the young lady's resigning her engagement and quitting the city. During her stay there she had not given the slightest indication of any dramatic bias, but whether driven to it by necessity or inclination, immediately on her departure she entered the profession, displayed great natural aptitude, and in an inconceivably short space of time became a popular and successful leading actress in the principal theatres. The fame of Miss Desmond (her new *nom du théâtre*) soon spread, and the elder Macready, ignorant of her identity, offered her an engagement by letter, which she immediately accepted.

The first person she encountered on her return, all feathers and finery, to Bristol was William Macready, who was astounded to recognise in the new tragedienne the quondam housekeeper of the family.

"Father!" he exclaimed, as he dashed into the managerial sanctum, "father, who do you think Miss Desmond is?"

"Arrah—how would I know?"

"Why, it's Kathleen!"

"What—what? *our* Kathleen?"

"Ours!"

"You tell me wonders, boy!"

More wonderful still, Miss Desmond leaped at once into the good graces of the Bristolians, and the

elder Macready married her at the end of the season !

To return to myself, Mrs. Macready (who had long been a widow) and her amiable daughter, Mrs. James Chute, were most kind to me, and the public of both theatres were appreciative beyond my deserts. Now more than ever I discovered the value of Miss Cushman's parting admonition. Had I not devoted myself, heart and soul, in Edinburgh, to understudy, I must have broken down utterly in Bristol. Most of the other members of the company had the advantage of me in age and experience, but I was "all there" with the text. I quote one week's work.

Monday, Richard III. ; Tuesday, Sir Giles Overreach ; Wednesday, Alexander the Great ; Thursday, Damon (*Damon and Pythias*) ; Friday, Doricourt (*Belle's Stratagem*) ; and Alessandri Massaroni (*The Brigand*).

Save Richard, I had not acted one of these parts, had never even met the plays ; yet I pulled through creditably, and was received favourably in all save Richard, which was a conspicuous failure.

Yet that failure to some extent determined my future career. At that time the popular Cibberian idea of the last of the Plantagenets was the monster indubitably designed by the Bard (who, I fear, was a bit of a courtier) to incarnate the mass of lies and libels handed down to posterity by the venal hirelings of the Tudor adventurer, who murdered (see Polydore Virgil) his noble adversary at Bosworth, and mangled and defiled the hero's body afterwards. As a literary work I admit that I was bound to carry

out the author's idea, but the brutal vulgarity of this scowling, growling, gibbering ruffian jarred upon me, and I elected to take Bulwer's view of the subject, making my Richard what the Countess of Desmond described him to be—a courtly, elegant gentleman, slightly round-shouldered. Grunt and grimace, bandy-legs and corkscrew ringlets I discarded altogether. I wore my own hair—I had plenty of it in those days. The pit and boxes endured me with placid severity; but the Olympians missed their beloved Quilp and *Quasimodo* monstrosity. The king of the gallery indignantly inquired, "Where's your 'ump? You ain't got no 'ump. The idea of King Dick without a 'ump!"

The old stagers were all opposed to my innovations. "The old style was good enough for Kean," they said, "and ought to be good enough for you. The idea of a raw, inexperienced boy daring to discard the glorious traditions of the past! What next?"

My King Henry, "Romeo" Maddocks (so called from having acted Romeo with dubious success with Emmeline Montague before the Queen at Covent Garden) delivered himself anent my unfortunate performance in this oracular fashion, "My good young friend, your Richard is all a mistake! You haven't the most distant idea of the part. You should see *me* in it! I've all Edmund Kean's business. Ah, sir, the little man was wonderful! You make nothing of *my* death. When he killed me and said, 'Down—down to hell, and say I sent thee thither!' he threw his great moons of eyes up to the gallery, and down came three tremendous rounds of applause!"

"But why on earth did he throw his eyes up to heaven when he was sending Henry down to hell?"

"Why—why? Because he chose to do so, and whatever the divine Edmund chose to do was right!"

Richard was repeated on Saturday at Bath. John Chute and I walked over there together, as indeed we frequently did. Imagine an up-to-date tragedian tramping a dozen miles before he walked on the stage for Richard! Thoroughly disheartened and depressed at Monday's failure, I said, "The idiots prefer Quilp and *Quasimodo*—well, they shall have both to-night!"

"Don't be an ass!" replied Chute. "The boobies were wrong, and you were right! Stick to your guns—to-night, at any rate! Remember, when Garrick and London wouldn't have the great Siddons, Bath *did*, and made her queen of the stage; then London followed suit!"

Thank God, I followed my friend's advice, and, lo! Bath accepted the new Richard as a revelation that very night. I have stuck to my guns ever since—not in Richard alone, but in every part I have ever played. Although I have not succeeded to the extent I could have wished, I have certainly done more than any man of my time to stamp out the old guttural absurdities of grumbling and growling which "made night hideous"—nay, more, I have impressed generations of auditors and actors with this truth, that "the art itself is nature," cultured and refined, 'tis true, but still natural.

Certain fashionable amateurs came down from town to give a series of performances on the pretext of charity. I fear, however, that vanity was the dominant



feature, and, although large sums were taken, the bulk thereof was devoted to hotel bills, carriages and horses, kid gloves and bouquets, while charity came off second best.

These performances occupied a month, and while they were taking place we were drafted off to Cardiff. On our way there we were becalmed for some hours in a fog in the Bristol Channel. Our girls, too much alarmed to go below, persisted in sitting on deck, and speedily became benumbed with cold ; whereupon I proposed jorums of steaming hot port wine negus, and, in the case of one of the more seasoned vessels, something still more potent, which, however, I had the satisfaction of seeing go down easily. While playing to the best of my ability the part of Ganymede, I cannoned against and capsized in the fog a very charming young lady who did not belong to our troupe. Luckily I did not hurt her, and she readily accepted my apologies. She did not, however, so readily acquiesce in my suggestion that she should join in a jorum of negus. But the fog and the intense cold caused her to hesitate, and "the woman who hesitates"—takes the negus ! At any rate my fair incognita did. On our arrival in Cardiff, a groom awaited her with a dog-cart, but no one knew who she was or where she was going, though all our fellows agreed that she was an uncommon nice girl.

Our season was uneventful save for one unusual and even unique occurrence. In the immediate vicinity of the theatre was located a large and famous boarding-school, devoted exclusively to the families of the upper ten of the Principality. The respective ages of the

girls ranged from fourteen to eighteen, and they were all more or less distinguished for birth, beauty, and good breeding. The periodical visits of the Bristol comedians was an important event, and it was customary for Mrs. Macready to set apart one night during the season for the delectation of Miss X.'s pupils, who decided by vote on the selection of the play. During our visit the choice fell on *Romeo and Juliet*. On this occasion the ordinary public were rigorously excluded. Although secrecy had been strictly enjoined, somehow or other it had leaked out that "The Ladies' Private Bespeak" was about to take place. Now, although the stern manageress had excluded the young bloods of the town from the theatre, she couldn't exclude them from the streets; hence, when the young ladies set forth for the play, they found (perhaps not altogether without satisfaction!) both sides of the street lined with rows of admirers, who sedately and respectfully escorted them to the theatre.

I never remember to have witnessed so remarkable a sight as the auditorium that night. The only male creatures present were Miss X.'s groom and gardener, who, accompanied by their wives and children, occupied the front row of the gallery; the sole occupants of the pit were the cook and domestic servants, who occupied the back row; while the boxes were crowded with a host of sweet girl graduates, redolent of health and high spirits, and effulgent in the first glow of youthful beauty. No applause greeted our efforts, but there was something better—devout attention and almost ecstatic absorption and even assimilation of the deathless love story. Our

fair auditors were so rapt that they seemed to be engaged in their devotions. Indeed, the representation almost assumed the character of one of those solemn and exalted functions of the old faith which, even in this materialistic age, still hold the spectator spellbound. When Juliet sank to eternal rest on Romeo's bosom, one great heartbeat seemed to pulsate throughout the house. The curtain fell in solemn silence: thus for a moment; then came a murmur of soft voices, which swelled out till it arose into a heavenly anthem and surged into an acclamation, until Juliet and her Romeo came to life, and emerged before the curtain amidst delighted and enthusiastic recognition. It was indeed delightful to hear those seraphic voices, to see those angelic faces, that forest of waving handkerchiefs. I had never seen such a sight before and have never seen it since, save when I recall this precious vision of my lost youth.

When our fair auditors emerged into the outer world, they found their escort eagerly mounting guard without. With bared heads and rows of lighted torches in the crowd, prospective Romeos escorted the embryonic Juliets home, where some bolder spirit than the rest called for "Three cheers for the fair maids of the Cwumry!" cheers which were right lustily given.

It was not until the morrow that we realised the full effect of that performance. By the first post came a bushel of letters—I dare not say how many I received, lest I should be suspected of "drawing the long-bow." Besides mine, there were shoals of letters to Mercutio, to Benvolio, to the County Paris, and even to Tybalt. All were of the most ingenuous character. Despite

the fact that Mercutio had a host of admirers, one fair correspondent of an æsthetic turn actually had the temerity to request him to denude himself of his luxuriant Piccadilly weepers, a pair of ornamental appendages of which handsome George (otherwise "The Big Pot") was not a little proud. On the other hand, Tybalt was bitterly reproached by another lady for having slain Mercutio; while Romeo—— But I prefer to be silent about that very much overrated young gentleman's conquests. One strong-minded young person, who signed herself "Perdita the Poetess," had a fixed idea that she could improve the author, and suggested that when the Friar appeared, after I had poisoned myself, he, the Friar aforesaid, should provide himself with a stomach pump, and, after an immediate and successful application thereof, the hero and heroine should rush into each other's arms and live happy ever afterwards. Some of our fair correspondents signed themselves variously Rowena, Rebecca, Hypatia, Imogen, Juliet, or Little Nell. Others, with a classical turn, became for the nonce Aenoné, Hieré, Pallas, or Aphrodité; while others, of a more romantic turn still, subscribed themselves "Yours to command, Gwendoline of the Grange," "Your admirer, Dark-ey'd Rosaleen," or, "Your adorer, Gladys with the Golden Hair." These epistles generally contained florid descriptions of the writer's personality, or, as they say on the race-cards, "age, height, weight, and colours of the riders," copiously supplemented by photographs. We were solemnly adjured to answer and to deposit our replies at nightfall in a particular locality indicated at the back of the school.

Our fair friends were usually taken out at mid-day on the outskirts of the town for a constitutional, and whenever our duties permitted, we were on the outskirts too on the opposite side of the road, appearing to be deeply immersed in the study of our parts. There was no possibility of approach, inasmuch as the girls were strictly guarded by their teachers, generally under the superintendence of the lady principal herself, a well-preserved, adipose creature of apparently about twenty stone avoirdupois and forty or fifty years, whose eyes were here, there, and everywhere, on the look-out for marauders with nefarious designs on her flock of "innocent lambkins." One of the most assiduous and persistent of my fair correspondents signed herself simply "Agnes." Her letters were so touching, from their tenderness and their ingenuousness, that I felt constrained to answer them as best I could. One morning there came a hasty note stating that, in consequence of her father's return from foreign parts, she was summoned immediately to Bristol. She had often seen me, she said, during her daily walks abroad, and would like to see me before she left. As for her, I should know her by the photograph she enclosed. Now it so happened that on this particular occasion 'twas the first time I had ever essayed Hamlet, and I couldn't by any possibility get away from rehearsal. I therefore wrote a note expressive of my regret and of the hope that, on my return to Bristol, I might have the pleasure of seeing her there. Confiding this hasty scrawl and the photograph to my father's ghost, I begged him to await the ladies on their return to school and to deliver the note to the

original of the photograph. Unfortunately the ghost was afflicted with a constitutional shyness, besides which his sight was a little defective. In his partial blindness and total obfuscation, he slipped the note into the hand of the lady teacher who mounted guard over poor Agnes. Had the teacher passed it on to her principal, it is impossible to say what direful consequences might not have ensued. As it was, she quietly returned it with the significant whisper, "My name is not Agnes! Tell Romeo the girl he looked after in the fog on the Bristol boat sends him back his letter, and begs him to be more careful in the future, or he may get his correspondent into trouble."

Two days afterwards there came from Bristol a bitter letter, reproaching me for not having kept tryst as desired.

I would not venture to recall these impressions of life's morning even under these closely veiled pseudonyms, did I not feel assured that, if any of these charming creatures be still in the land of the living, they will be pleased to know that their quondam Romeo—though now "a potent, grave, and reverend signor," still retains a vivid recollection of sympathies which encouraged him in an arduous fight with fortune and still keeps the memory of his gracious sympathisers green in a heart which still cherishes a grateful memory of the friends of his youth.

On our return to Bristol, Alfred Wigan joined us for a few weeks as a sort of semi-star. He was by no means "a blaze of triumph"; indeed, he succeeded in "ventilating" the house most effectually. He acted

in a very invertebrate manner in two or three "pappy" pieces, the very names of which I have forgotten. The only character in which he really distinguished himself was Achille Talma Dufard in *My Daughter's Début*; and even in this part he distinguished himself in an unfortunate style. The *raison d'être* of this bright little sketch is made obvious by the title. From the rise to the fall of the curtain, a certain old actor is intriguing to get his daughter an appearance and, of course, at the end of it a call before the curtain. On the first night, at the end of the play, in response to the call for the *débutante*, Wigan was so indiscreet as to come before the curtain *without* his daughter. Down came the "bird," and M. Dufard had to beat a hasty retreat; nor were the audience easily mollified, not even when he returned leading his daughter (Miss Fanny Marsh, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of the late Henry Marston) before the curtain.

At this period Wigan and I fraternised a good deal, and he confided to me many of his past adventures and some of his aspirations for the future. He told me he had been connected in some official capacity with the Dramatic Authors' Society, and that he had written two or three pieces; he told me, also, of his well-known freak in *The Wandering Minstrel* business; and "thereby hangs a tale." A few years before, a well-known and eccentric M.P. had made a bet that he would take his guitar, disguise himself as a Spanish troubadour, and, while scrupulously maintaining his incognito, gather a large sum of money. This gentleman won his wager easily. Encouraged by his example, a number of

audacious young bloods followed suit ; in fact, the country was inundated with wandering minstrels, of whom Wigan was one of the foremost.

Some time before I met him in Bristol, I encountered in Edinburgh and Liverpool a little vocalist named C——, who boasted that he was one of the original minstrels, and that he had had a “ fine high time of it ” while cruising round the country. Some of the Liverpool boys “ pooh-pooh'd ” the story of his peaceful triumphs ; whereupon he made a bet of a dinner with Walter S——, the tragedian, and Harry L——, the “ heavy man,” that on one of the off-nights he would go over with them to Birkenhead and gather five pounds in the course of the evening. At nightfall they went over by the ferry-boat, and ordered dinner at the principal hotel for nine o'clock. C—— then donned his singing-garb—a kind of Robin Hood dress—and turned out with his guitar, followed by the other fellows, who mounted guard over him, so as to prevent collusion. Whenever and wherever he struck up, with a slight foreign accent, “ Our Ellen is the fairest flower,” or “ Annie Laurie,” or “ The Light Guitar,” down came sixpences and shillings galore. Once, indeed, in a retired square, a buxom domestic of the cookie order shied some coppers at his feet ; whereupon he remarked with asperity, “ Ze terms of my vager not allow me to touch coppare ; leave im for ze beggar-man. Coppare is not for an 'idalgo de l'Espagne.”

This dignified address brought down a shower of silver ; it also brought his probation to an end. In less than two hours he had netted something like six pounds ; and so the young rascals went back, and “ ate of the fat



and drank of the sweet" at the expense of the fair maids of Birkenhead, for, of course, although the other fellows had lost the wager, C—— would not hear of their "owning up."

To the best of my recollection, Wigan told me that he had made his first appearance on the stage as D'Arville in *The Spitalfields Weaver*, under Braham's management, at the St. James's, where he acted as Mr. Sidney; that he afterwards went to the Mathews' at Covent Garden; then to the Keeleys at the period when I first saw him at the Lyceum. During our pleasant rambles on Clifton Downs he confided to me that he was a disappointed tragedian, and that the ambition of his life was to enact Hamlet and Shylock—an ambition destined to remain unsatisfied till towards the end of his career, when, I believe, he attempted both parts in Scarborough and Liverpool with dubious success. Soon after we parted, he joined the Keans and the Keeleys at the Princess's, where he attempted a number of parts for which he was singularly ill-qualified, especially in the Shakespearian drama. The truth is he was utterly unrhythmical, and had no single spark of the divine afflatus. As far as his resources carried him, he was an admirable and accomplished actor; but his resources never carried him with advantage out of the coat and trousers of the nineteenth century.

I prefer not to dwell on his failures, but rather to commemorate his successes, which, as soon as he found a suitable opening, were considerable. I have before mentioned his admirable rendition of Dufard; but this part by no means stood alone in his studies of

French character. His companion pictures in *A Lucky Friday*, *A Model of a Wife*, but more particularly in Tourbillon in *Parents and Guardians*, were distinct and original creations, defined with infinite variety and precision, and intoned with a perfectly pure Parisian accent. Undoubtedly, however, his greatest triumph in the higher range of art was in the part of Château Renaud in *The Corsican Brothers*, one of the most unique, perfect, and powerful performances the stage has ever witnessed. I never heard him tell Montgiron in the last scene to prepare his mother for the news of his death without a strange sense of painful but sympathetic emotion. Then the fight with Kean was a superb exhibition of sword-play which I have never seen equalled except upon one occasion by Charles Dillon and another person, who shall here be nameless. Kean told me that Wigan was always a fractious and rebellious subject, and he was glad when he left the theatre. When he did so, and found himself manager of the Olympic, he alighted on his feet, and then commenced a succession of triumphs which continued through the whole of this short but memorably successful management.

At the end of the Bristol season Mr. George Smith, our stage manager, who had formerly been manager of the Norwich circuit, proposed that we should accompany him to Canterbury, where I—— But I must defer our adventures in Kent to the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *A FIRST VISIT TO THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND*

Canterbury at Midsummer—Our Box Audience—Cleopatra—The Dane John and "My Dear Lady Disdain"—At Braham's Concert—I call a Carriage—Am shown in and shown out—We depart for Rochester—Out of the Frying-Pan into the Fire—An Uninvited though not Unwelcome Guest—We move on to Gravesend—Lady Disdain develops a Temper—Cleopatra returns to Canterbury, and I depart to the Isle of Wight.

**A**LTHOUGH I had not been in London for three years, and was anxious to have a peep at the theatres, time did not permit, and I merely rushed from Paddington to London Bridge on my way to Canterbury. It was midsummer, and, besides the fine weather, which militated grievously against us, we had not a single element of female attraction in the company. Our worthy manageress, who had been our old woman in Bristol (and an admirable one), now harked back to Juliet, Pauline, and the like ; while I, still in my first youth, was condemned to find in one and the same person the fond wife and the affectionate mother. The result was "a beggarly account of empty boxes." One box, indeed, was never entirely empty. Rain or shine, we had always one auditor—a woman of phenomenal beauty, whom we came to regard as our box audience, and whom Artaud christened Cleopatra. Under

ordinary circumstances she occupied the central seat in the circle, where she reigned sole monarch of all she surveyed. On the rare occasions, however, when we had something approximating to a "house," she retained a stage box all to herself. Whenever a call occurred (a matter of rare occurrence), she invariably threw me a handful of flowers. In acknowledging them, a kind of optical acquaintance ensued. I bowed, she smiled, I smiled again; but she was not all smiles, as I soon ascertained.

But I've not described her. Nearly half a century ago, yet I can see her still irradiating the dingy little theatre with the light of her beauty, which "hung upon the cheek of night like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear!" By day, however, 'twas more effulgent still. When I first met her in the Dane John, the sight and possibly the sound of the music (for the band were playing "The Blue Danube"), dazzled, bewildered, enchanted me. More than common tall, she possessed a form of perfect symmetry, revealed rather than concealed by diaphanous garments of muslin and lace and flowers; the bloom of an English rose shone through the delicate olive of a classic face; a low forehead was crowned with a profusion of blue-black curling hair; a pair of delicately pencilled brows almost met in the centre; while violet lids with long trailing eyelashes set off great purple eyes, which flashed with sparks of golden fire. The slightest suspicion of down fledged an upper lip curved like a Cupid's bow, through which at intervals gleamed two rows of pearl-tinted teeth. Instinctively I took off my hat to this gorgeous apparition.

To my mortification, and apparently to the amusement of a group of military loungers, my homage was responded to with the stoniest of stony glares. That night there was a "bespeak" at the theatre. My disdainful beauty appropriated the right-hand stage-box according to custom, and there she sat with more flowers than usual. At the end of *Used Up* there was a call for Sir Charles Coldstream. When I came before the curtain, down came a bouquet from the private box; but Sir Charles "was not taking any." Apparently it was then her turn to be chagrined, and she made no attempt to conceal her annoyance. That was her last visit to the theatre, and she was conspicuous only by her absence at the Dane John. Once, indeed, she galloped past my window on horseback, and a very striking figure she cut in her riding-habit; but from that time forth I saw her no more until—— But "I am anticipating," as they were wont to say in the old-time novel.

The houses became so bad that our manager decided to move on to Rochester for a few weeks. The afternoon before our departure, having explored the Dane John in vain for a parting glimpse of Cleopatra, I went to hear evensong at the cathedral and to have a last look at the spot where Thomas à Becket was murdered. As I came out I encountered Mr. Braham and his sons, Hamilton and Augustus, strolling along the High Street, and ventured to remind the old gentleman of our slight acquaintance in Edinburgh. He was giving a concert that night at the Assembly Rooms, and was kind enough to invite me. All the

little big-wigs of the city were there, but the most conspicuous figure in the room was Cleopatra!

As is customary in a garrison town, the military were very much in evidence, and gave themselves all-conquering airs and graces amongst the too susceptible fair of their acquaintance.

The concert over, a general move was made toward the door. When Cleopatra approached, towering head and shoulders over every one, the women gathered up their skirts; and when she reached the vestibule, they shrank away altogether, as if in dread of contamination. Every lady had a cavalier; she only remained alone. Seeing her thus tabooed, I was again tempted to lift my hat. Evidently, though I did so with some hauteur, the courtesy touched her, for she flushed up to the eyes and dropped a most profound and gracious curtsy. Softened and subdued, I ventured to inquire, "Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, please call my carriage," she replied.

The carriage was called; she stepped in—so did I. In almost absolute silence we drove to a villa on the outskirts of the city. I jumped out, assisted her to descend, and bade her good-night.

"It is not good-night, but good-bye, isn't it?" she inquired.

"Yes—good-bye!" I replied somewhat brusquely.

"Not yet! It's barely ten o'clock. We've two hours to the good! David, come back with the carriage at twelve.

"Won't you—won't you come in?"

I accepted the invitation. Then the mystery thickened.

There was no servant ; but supper (a substantial one) was laid out and waiting. We supped *tête-à-tête*. She was as hospitable as mysterious, and more eccentric even than hospitable. Eagerly looking at her beautiful hands, I saw no trace of a wedding-ring. I tried to draw her out—about music, poetry, the drama. They were all sealed books to her ; but cricket, boating, swimming, archery, riding, driving were congenial topics. She made no pretence to sentiment, but was *bonne camarade*. In the slang of to-day, she would have been called “A right down good fellow.” To me, however, steeped at that time to the lips in Shakespeare, Byron, Tennyson, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, she was but a beautiful Tom-boy, and I was utterly disillusioned when at length she began to smoke cigarettes (then a novel accomplishment for a woman). At the sight I immediately rose and took up my hat.

“Don’t like smoking, eh?” she inquired airily. “I thought you were a man. I begin to fancy you’re a milk-sop! There, there, no offence! We can’t all be Romeos and Juliets, you know!”

“Evidently not. Good-bye.”

“What! you’re off, and it’s really good-bye! Well, good-bye then,” and, saucily presenting her pouting lips, she continued, “Well, yes, you may if you like!”

“Madam,” I replied loftily, “I never kiss a girl who smokes!”

“Dear me! Then perhaps you’ll allow the gel who smokes to show you the door!”

With that she did show me the door, where I found the carriage waiting.

"David," said she, "drive this gentleman to his diggin's. By-bye, Mr. Romeo!—Don't look so down in the mouth.—Off you go, David! Gee up—gee whoa!"

As we drove away, with her laughter ringing in my ears, I arrived at the conclusion that she was eminently natural and that I was an affected young prig.

Our campaign at Rochester proved even more disastrous than at Canterbury. We opened to a house of eighteen shillings with *The Lady of Lyons*, and next night with *Hamlet* rose to twenty-eight. With expenses at fifteen pounds a night, this was rather a bad look-out. Chute, Artaud, and I lived and boarded together for economy's sake. Fortunately we had all saved something against a rainy day, and happily were not altogether dependent upon the receipts. We didn't act every night. On one of our off-nights we had been to see John Douglas's panorama (I forget what it was about), and on returning home we found the hall littered with luggage and the landlady beaming.

"Oh, sir!" she gushed, "she has come!"

"*She!* whom?"

"Why—the missis!"

"The missis!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes, indeed! and it's the fortunate young gentleman you are, for it's the Queen of Beauty she is!"

"Is the woman mad or dreaming?" I inquired.

"Neither one nor the other, sir, as you'll see when you go upstairs."

Bursting with curiosity, I leapt up three steps at



a time, pushed into my room, and found myself face to face with—Cleopatra !

“ You here ! ” I gasped.

“ Just me, myself, and nobody else ! ” she replied, dropping a low curtsey. “ I hope I don’t intrude ? ”

“ Intrude ! ”

“ Oh, I’ve sworn off smoking ! ”

“ Glad to hear that ! ”

“ Then you’re not going to show *me* the door ? ” she inquired demurely.

The position was extremely awkward. There were two men below, who, although certainly aware of her existence, were totally ignorant of our acquaintance. When I explained the situation, she laughed heartily, and seemed rather to enjoy my embarrassment—indeed, she might have been the boy and I the girl.

“ I didn’t expect to find those fellows here ! ” she said. “ But never mind ! Now that I am here, here I stay. As for Mother Grundy downstairs, I’ve shown her this already ! ” and she displayed a substantial wedding-ring on her finger. “ And you ? You’re not going to turn me out, then, after all ? ”

For answer I stopped her mouth, and she returned the compliment.

“ I’m hungry as a hunter, so take me down to supper, and introduce me to your friends. Oh, I’m not afraid ! They can’t do more than kill me ! ”

In less than five minutes she was presiding over the supper table, chatting and chaffing and laughing as though she had known us all her life. My comrades were gentlemen, and treated her with chivalrous courtesy ;

and, despite the somewhat anomalous position, for the next fortnight we had all a real good time.

The weather was delightful, the country charming. We had long rambles daily, and took stock of the castle ruins and a peep at Gadshill, then but recently acquired by Charles Dickens ; looked in at the "Seven Poor Travellers," explored Chatham, tried to locate the scene of the bombardment when the Dutch sacked the town and the valiant Van Trump sank our ships in the Medway during the inglorious reign of "The Merry Monarch."

One night, to my astonishment, Mr. Fox Cooper, journalist, playwright, and sometime manager of the Strand Theatre, put in an appearance, sat out *Hamlet*, came round at the end of the play, introduced himself, and offered me a week's engagement at the Gravesend Theatre, of which he was then manager. Fortunately I had the week to spare, prior to opening in the Isle of Wight. The offer was tempting ; I was to be "starred" in my pet parts, to have a certainty of five pounds, and "to divide the plunder" each night, after the manager had taken the first five pounds. The matter was settled there and then, and when I told Cleopatra of the arrangement she said, "Very good ! When you're off to Ryde, I shall go back to Canterbury ; but meanwhile, if you're not tired of me already, I'm going on to Gravesend."

So that matter was also settled, and off we went next day.

On our arrival, I speedily discovered why Mr. Cooper had been so anxious to secure me. A pupil of Jack

Ryder's, young, lovely, accomplished, and wealthy, wanted to try her 'prentice hand on Juliet, Ophelia, Desdemona, Lady Teazle, Letitia Hardy, and Pauline, and had arranged to provide the astute manager with a valuable consideration for the privilege of exploitation. There was a fairly good house (something like four or five and twenty pounds) on the opening night to Romeo and Juliet, and my share came to nearly ten pounds! Ten pounds in a night, when I had recently been getting ten shillings a week, and sometimes not that!

I was in the seventh heaven of delight; but Cleopatra was anything but jolly. So long as my Juliet was elderly and unattractive, it didn't matter; but when she was young and lovely—ah! that was a different pair of shoes, as I soon found to my cost! When we sat down to supper after the play, my lady opened fire.

"Why did you bring me here?" she demanded abruptly.

"I thought you wished to come!"

"So I did; but I didn't imagine I should be insulted!"

"I don't understand!"

"*She* does, though!"

"She! Who?"

"Why, that woman!"

"What woman?"

"Why, that thing—that Juliet! Of course you understand each other perfectly! You, with your kissing, and cuddling, and sprawling, and fiddling with her tow! I wonder the beastly stuff didn't burn your fingers;

while as for her, the shameless hussy ! she's old enough to know better—five-and-thirty if she's a day ! But she looks as if she could eat you ! It's positively indecent—so it is ! ”

“Nonsense ! she merely does the usual business.”

“If she does it again, I'll put a knife into her. Look out—or I will ! ”

Look out indeed ! It was a pleasant look-out for me during the remainder of that week.

I fancy my fair friend on the stage must have had an inkling of the actual state of affairs, for she seemed to take a malicious pleasure in teasing her rival. At any rate, the two women glared fire and fury, and every moment I was in continual dread lest the one should leap upon the stage and do some mortal injury to the other.

On the last night we did *Othello*, and I delivered Paris's defence of the stage from Massinger's now obsolete play *The Roman Actor*. There was a very good house, and I think I netted altogether about thirty pounds by the week's work. It was money hardly earned, though, for Cleopatra's temper made life unendurable, and I was really glad when the engagement came to an end. The strangulation of Desdemona, however, proved a peace-offering ; and when next day Cleo took the train for Canterbury loaded with fruit and flowers, though not particularly lively, she was more amenable to reason than she had been for some time.

“It's good-bye now, for good ! ” she gasped rather ruefully. “Never mind ! we've had a good time ! And you'll think of me sometimes, won't you ? ”

"Always!"

"That's real nice of you. And you're not going to town with that thing, with her maid, and her buttons, are you?"

"Certainly not!"

"Honour?"

"Oh! honour!"

"I'm glad of that! And, mind! you're going to be a great man one of these days, and I shall be proud of you. As for me, I'll never smoke any more. Good-bye! Once more! good-bye. And here! I say, Jack?"

"Well?"

"I really wish you had strangled that cat of a Desdemona with her beastly red hair! I should have been easier in my mind!"

## CHAPTER XXV

### MACREADY

*Première of The Stranger*—John Kemble's Wig—Boys and Girls, and the Golden Time of Youth—My Second Season at Bath and Bristol—The Poet Bunn and his Monopologue—Henry Mayhew and the Caudle Lectures—Macready's Farewell Engagement—The Company—"A Milky way of Stars to Grace a Comet's Glittering Wake"—At Nineteen Years of Age I am permitted to attempt Othello to the Iago of the Greatest Actor of the Age—He recognises the Truant Schoolboy—Recollections of the Greatest Actor of the Age.

MR. BARNETT, the Ryde manager, was an eccentric old gentleman, who had been a pupil of the Kembles, and was present at the *première* of *The Stranger*, when the illustrious John Philip, on his first entrance, caught his hat on the top of the doorway, and, denuded of both hat and wig, landed at the foot-lights with a head bald as a billiard ball. In these irreverent times I fear an incident like this would have "cooked" the piece altogether. On that occasion, however, Black Jack merely bowed politely, retired with dignified composure to readjust his jazey, returned to the stage, and proceeded as if nothing had happened, and the success of Sheridan's play is ancient history.

By the bye, it was not his play at all. No, no! of course, every one knows it was Kotzebue's. I don't mean that—what I really do mean is that even the adaptation was not his. He stole it. There is nothing

remarkable in that. All authors are thieves—or, to be precise, were, for, of course, no one thieves nowadays except a certain illustrious Frenchman, who swoops down upon a quarry like an eagle, or an emperor, and “collars” anything which takes his imperial fancy. Homer—— But I have not space to ventilate my views about the blind old bard ; besides which, Pisistratus—— Psha ! who cares for Pisistratus now ? Suppose, then, we begin with our own Bard, for

The thief of all thieves is the Warwickshire thief.

So said, or sang, David Garrick at Stratford Jubilee on sweet Will’s birthday a century and a half ago ; and Little Davy

(Describe me who can  
That abridgment of all that was pleasant in man)

was an authority on this branch of the fine arts ! The Bard was not only the greatest poet and playwright, but the greatest thief of his time, or any other time, for the matter of that. He stole the history plays, lock, stock, and barrel, from the muniment chest of the Globe, and changed the old lamps to new ; he stole *Macbeth* from Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, *Julius Cæsar* and *Coriolanus* from Plutarch and Livy, *Romeo and Juliet* from Bandello, *Othello* from Giraldo Cinthio, *The Winter’s Tale* from poor Bob Greene, *Hamlet* from Saxo Grammaticus and Thomas Kyd, and *Rosalind* from Lodge ; in fact, he stole right and left, though it must be admitted that he did his spiriting gently, for he found his stuff lead, and left it gold.

Prior to his time, the thieves had not the *nous* to

secure the plunder permanently. He was wiser in his generation. He published the poems, which the pirates dared not steal, but was too cute to publish his plays, which they would have stolen if they had got the ghost of a chance, and so have sent the business of the Globe to smash. Molière frankly avowed that "he took his own where he found it"; hence he could scarcely complain when Cibber and Wycherley and their brother thieves laid him under contribution at the Restoration. Garrick took all that came in his way. "Goldy," "who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll," stole *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which will endure as long as the English language, from an obscure German story-teller, and sold it, or rather got "old Bruin" to sell it, under pressure of poverty, for £20 to satisfy a rapacious landlady. My friend Wills stole it again, and converted it into *Olivia*, which Ellen Terry has made "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

Boucicault was an omnivorous "snapper-up of: unconsidered trifles"—notably of Gerald Griffin's *Collegians* (see *The Colleen Bawn*) and of one of Mayne Reid's most popular novels (see *The Octoroon*), of *The Bohemians* and Augustin Daly's *Under the Gaslight in After Dark*, and of *Le Pauvre de Paris* in *The Poor of London and New York*.

Daly was himself a prince of pirates, and it would be interesting to know how much that prolific appropriator of other men's ideas paid Mosenthal for *Deborah* (Leah), or how much the same author received for *The Private Secretary* from its English



adaptee ; and it would doubtless be indiscreet to inquire how much the author of *Montjoie* got for his share in *A Bunch of Violets*.

Tom Robertson did not scruple to lay Legouv  s *L'Aventuri  re* under contribution for *Home* or Sullivan for *Garrick* and Benedick for *School*.

At an earlier period Dick Sheridan stole the greater portion of *The School for Scandal* from *L'  cole des Femmes* and *Tom Jones* ; and if the scandalous chronicles of the period may be credited, lifted the remainder from a too-confiding lady who entrusted her MS. comedy to the enterprising impresario and never saw it again. However that may be, he never attempted to conceal that he stole *The Critic* from the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal* or *A Trip to Scarboro'* from Cibber ; and, with still more unblushing effrontery, he annexed *Pizarro* and *The Stranger* from a little Yorkshire lawyer, who had in his turn "conveyed" them from Kotzebue.

*Apropos* of *The Stranger*, I opened in this play at Ryde ; and Mr. Barnett, who had actually enacted Francis with John Kemble, played it with me. Day or night, the eccentric old gentleman was always attired in evening dress, white choker, pumps, and black silk stockings. He rarely went on the stage, but when he did, he merely substituted a Romaldi doublet for his claw hammer, leaving his choker and vest, his pants and pumps undisturbed in their native elegance. On my opening night, while I was directing him to bring my two children from "the town hard by," an obstreperous brat set up a prolonged howl from the gallery.

"Beg pardon, sir," interposed the old villain, "but isn't that one of 'em up yonder?"

Depend upon it, there wasn't much more of that scene heard.

Our company was small but efficient. There was my dear old friend Harry Craven, the dramatist; old Mr. Waldron, the tragedian, and his son (a very useful actor); William Shalders, so long afterwards with William Farren at the Strand; Tom Fry, a capital low comedian; and a perfect galaxy of lovely young girls. In point of fact, there were about three or four lasses to every lad. To begin with, there was Miss Love (afterwards the first Mrs. Herman Vezin), Miss Fanny Hughes (afterwards Mrs. Gaston Murray), Miss Agnes Kemble (afterwards Mrs. Clifford Cooper, mother of Frank Cooper and Cooper Cliffe), Mrs. Addison (mother of Fanny and Carlotta), Miss Eardley, a beautiful and accomplished woman whom I saw afterwards act *Pauline* to Barry Sullivan's *Claude* at Drury Lane, and who attained celebrity in America in the diverse rôles of teacher of music and elocution, and as *Meg Merrilies* and *Iago*! Besides these, there was Mrs. Barnett, an admirable comedy actress, and her niece, the buxom Miss Clare.

We usually disported ourselves in the lighter pieces from the *répertoire* of Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris, varied by an occasional tragedy. We played only three nights a week, and on the off-nights we usually went out in the afternoon picnicing and sea-bathing.

Though our audiences were occasionally more select

than numerous, we had usually pretty good houses. Sometimes in our excessive zeal, grotesque incidents would occur. One night I remember in particular, in *Bertram*, when I exclaimed,

Take these black hairs, torn from a head that hates thee,  
Deep be their dye ere ransomed in thy heart's blood or mine !

I was so carried away "by the passion of the scene" that I plucked off my raven locks altogether, and displayed my tangled mop of brown beneath ! Yet such is the power of earnestness, our auditors did not even smile.

The first Mrs. Vezin (by the way, a remarkably handsome woman) had not a tithe of the cultured ability of her successor. Yet in moments of tragic intensity she rose to a height which her successor never approached. This was especially indicated in the performance of *Lady Randolph*. In the situation where she recognises Norval as her long-lost son, with a piercing cry she leaped upon me and pressed me to her bosom, caressing and raining kisses on my hair, my eyes, my brow, till the entire house was carried away by this overpowering burst of maternal emotion. On this very occasion I remember seeing Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Mark Lemon, T. P. Cooke, Tom Higgue, Webster, and Celeste rise from their seats, waving their handkerchiefs and cheering like people possessed ! Now, in an exactly similar situation, in *The Rightful Heir*, which she acted with me, the second Mrs. Vezin—admirable actress though she was—never came within measurable distance of her predecessor.

It was in Ryde that I renewed my slight acquaintance with Charles Dickens, Webster, and Celeste, and became on terms of friendly intimacy with my dear friends T. P. Cooke and Tom Higgue, both "fellows of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy."

For my benefit I selected *Hamlet* (I was never happy if I didn't play either Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Lear, Claude, Richelieu, Rover, Charles Surface or Doricourt, Don Cæsar, Charles Coldstream, or O'Callaghan, at least once a week!). We had some difficulty in casting *Hamlet*, but the girls all came to the rescue, and gladly offered to disport themselves as boys. Hence we had feminine Franciscos, Marcel-luses, Bernardos, Rosencrantzes, Guildensterns, and Osrics, and very well they all looked in their unmentionables. Nor was this all. Bless their dear hearts! they actually made with their own fair hands an elegant Hamlet dress, and presented it to the beneficiare. Just as the doors were about to be opened, and the crowd (for there was one) was clamouring for admittance, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean arrived from Portsmouth, and had to be smuggled into the boxes through the stage door, while Mr. Barnett secured them rooms in the adjacent hotel. When it was known they were in front, we were all a mass of nerves, and naturally I was more nervous than any one; but when Mr. Barnett came after the play, with Mr. Kean's compliments, requesting the pleasure of my company to supper, I was easier in my mind, especially when the old gentleman said, "You've knocked 'em, my boy!"

I was received most graciously by these distinguished

people, who said all manner of kind things. They were about to open the Princess', in conjunction with the Keeleys, and they offered me an engagement for the juvenile business. Had I not been a fool, I should have accepted it; but my foot was in the stirrup—I was returning to Bristol for the winter season as principal tragedian; Macready was retiring, and, with the modesty of youth, I thought I had only to step into his shoes. Ass, double-distilled idiot that I was, to imagine that a dwarf could at a moment's notice disport himself in the robe of a giant. That refusal was one of a series of mistakes I made, and possibly one of the most fatal. The season there over, while on our way to Guildford, we acted for one night in Portsmouth, where I appeared as Don Cæsar and Sir Charles Coldstream, apparently to the satisfaction of a very crowded house. I was introduced to Mrs. Nesbitt, and she not only did me the honour to sit out the performance, but when I came before the curtain threw me a bouquet into the bargain. I was so proud of that bouquet that I kept it till every flower had not only faded, but withered away.

At Guildford we had a very good season, but our success did not follow us through to Reading, where we wound up. While there, however, Henry Farren came down to see me act, and offered me, on behalf of his father, an engagement at the Olympic; but, of course, the tragedian of Bath and Bristol did not see his way to playing second fiddle to Henry Farren and Leigh Murray.

My second season at Bath and Bristol was not

particularly eventful, except for the farewell of Macready.

Knowing that, in order to do honour to the occasion, his mother-in-law intended to retain a more than usually numerous and efficient company, I ventured to recommend my fair friend from Liverpool, Miss Le Blanc. The old lady was graciously pleased to engage my *protégée*, whose beauty and superb proportions created quite a sensation in the company, which comprised no less than four leading ladies—Mrs. Faucit Saville (the mother of my charming friend Kate Saville), Mrs. Pauncefort (then in the flower of her youth), the beautiful Mrs. Maddocks, and Mrs. Marcus Elmore. Besides these ladies, there were Miss Cuthbert and Miss Carr (both admirable comediennes), Mrs. W. H. Angel (principal old woman), Fanny Marston (the lovely daughter of Henry Marston of Sadler's Wells), and half a dozen other ladies whose very names I cannot remember. Foremost among the men came Cathcart, the tragedian ; "Romeo" Maddocks, an actor of limited ability but large experience ; Fitzroy, an admirable old man ; the Waldrons, father and son ; Marcus Elmore ; William Shalders ; Oliver Summers ; John Chute ; George Lee ; Mr. Morgan ; Mr. Mulford ; and three famous comedians, Angel, Gomersal, and Artaud. When I recall this list of names, I am amazed even now to think that, handicapped as I was by youth and experience, I was ever permitted to hold the leading position in so distinguished a company.

The only notable occurrences I remember prior to Macready's arrival, except occasional visits to Bath, were

the advent of Alfred Bunn, sometime manager of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and of Mr. Henry Mayhew, Douglas Jerrold's son-in-law, and one of the shining lights of *Punch*. The "poet," who was extremely agreeable to me, gave a very interesting entertainment, which he called a "Monopologue," but which was in fact a piquant narrative of his managerial experiences, while Mr. Mayhew commenced a summary of *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures* which the audience did not permit him to complete. It was a pitiable sight to see this great manly fellow exhibiting himself in "Mother Caudle's" nightcap. Half-way through this farrago of vulgar rubbish he collapsed. A sympathiser from the front then suggested a song. In compliance, the unfortunate Caudleizer struck up "The Sun—The Jolly Old Sun," broke down in the second verse ignominiously, and had to turn tail and bolt for his life amidst a chorus of derisive cat-calls.

At last came Macready, who enacted Macbeth, Hamlet, Iago, Werner, Virginius, Richelieu, Lord Townly, and Henry IV. to houses crowded from floor to roof. I had the honour to be allotted Macduff, the Ghost, Othello, Ulric, Icilius, De Mauprat, Edgar, and the Prince of Wales. Othello and the Ghost I had acted before ; but all the others were new parts, which involved sitting up half the night with wet towels on my head and frequent potions of strong coffee. It was a matter of honour to be letter perfect in these great works, and, indeed, the imputation of being imperfect in the text was considered an indelible stigma upon an actor's reputation

in those days. There was a strong feeling of *esprit de corps* amongst us, too. We all assisted in the music of *Macbeth*. As leading man I set the example by rushing off from the Murder Scene and hurrying on the next moment as a witch. Then, when Mrs. Saville played Lady Macbeth, the other three leading ladies not only assisted in the music, but actually sat on in the Banquet Scene as speechless gentlewomen!

It is scarcely possible to convey even the approximation of an idea of what we, the youth of that day, gained by being brought into contact with Macready at rehearsal. He poured forth treasures of knowledge in reckless, never-ending profusion. Our only difficulty in following his directions was that sometimes they were given *sotto voce* and in a growl. In rehearsing the last scene of *Werner* he said to me, "Sir, will you be good enough to—err—to do me the favour when I say—err—err—to stand—err—err—and don't move hand or foot till I lift my—err—err—— You understand?"

"Not quite, sir."

"Good God! am I not speaking the English language?"

"I presume so, sir; but as it is my misfortune—not to clearly understand, if you will kindly tell me intelligibly where I am to stand when you say—'err—err'—I won't move hand or foot till you lift your—err—err——"

He looked at me dubiously and even angrily for a moment, then repeated the direction with clearness and precision.

*Apropos* of the remarkable vocal eccentricities to



which these refer, Mr. Murdoch, the eminent American actor (whom I remember with pleasure to have seen act young Mirabel in *The Inconstant*, at the Haymarket), in his interesting book *The Stage* accounts for them by a very ingenious hypothesis. He says :

“The ordinary current of Macready’s articulation was marked by a certain catching of the breath preceding the utterance of the initial syllable of certain words. A sudden catch of the glottis, which caused a short cough-like sound to be heard previous to the articulative movement of the voice, was a distinctly marked characteristic of the elder Kean’s utterance. This peculiar organic act is the result of a dropping of the jaw and consequent depression of the larynx ; it gives strength to the muscles which are called into play, and controls the organs of vocality, thus enabling the speaker to execute the vowel sound from what may be called the carduous parts of the mouth—that space which includes the roots of the tongue, the glottis, and pharynx. This power, when joined to the guttural murmur or deeply aspirated quality of the voice, is a strong element of expressive force in the suppressive utterance of passionate language in the drama. . . .

“In his youth Macready possessed a voice of great clearness, compass, and beauty. His performances, however, lacked the so-termed originality of effect which brings an audience to their feet and makes them hoarse with approving plaudits. Disappointed in his hopes, and comparing his acting with that of other tragedians who were more successful, he accepted in due time the idea so prevalent that what is popular must be perfect. He therefore remodelled his style by degrees, though, it

may be, without intending imitation, and acquired some of the peculiarly expressive traits of certain distinguished performers then masters of the situation in London.

"In consequence of this change of base, his acting became more theatrical or stagey. His fervour and impulse were not in the least abated, and were still influenced by taste and good judgment, which it was not in his nature to lose sight of; but his effects were produced more in conformity with the fashion of the times, and were at last pronounced brilliant manifestations of artistic skill. Thus he established a reputation of increased pecuniary worth, and finally became the embodiment of what was ultimately termed the highest development of genius."

If Murdoch's theory be, as it seems to be, correct, it is a lamentable conclusion to arrive at. It appears to be certain that Macready's "voice lost its clearing and other attractive qualities of tone, and became harsh and was at times repulsive; this, in addition to his strongly marked peculiarities of speech, became as much the nature of the actor as if it had been born with him."

When Mr. Macready condescended to be colloquial he was most gracious and fascinating. I recall with pleasure an occasion when he confided to me how he came to improvise a sublime "gag" in the last scene of the gloomy play of *Werner*. He acted the part for the first time in the Bristol theatre. In the last scene, carried away by the excitement of the moment, he rushed down to Charles Kemble Mason, who played Gabor, and demanded, "Are you a father?" Then he growled *soito voce*,

“Say ‘No.’” Whereupon Gabor shouted, “*No!*” while in a burst of paternal emotion, *Werner* rejoined :

Then you cannot feel for misery like mine !  
and the pit “rose at him.”

It was under exactly similar circumstances that he introduced the famous line :

Oh, for one hour of youth !

in the fourth act of *Richelieu*. *Apropos* of which, of all his performances I venture to think this was the greatest and most perfect creation. I had seen Forrest before him ; I have seen all the great actors since ; I have myself enacted the part frequently ; but I have never yet seen any one approach within measurable distance of Macready in this wonderful impersonation. His smile, when Julie de Mauprat sat at his feet, irradiated his grim face with angelic beauty. His “business” with the sword and the pen, in two moments took the auditor back two ages : one moment he was the mail-clad warrior smiting “the stalwart Englisher to the waist” at Rochelle ; the next, he was the feeble but mighty statesman, wielding a weapon more potent than the two-handed falchion of Charles Martel. The famous “Never-say-fail !” speech thrilled through one like a trumpet-call. His tenderness to his orphan ward contrasted in strong relief with his scornful denunciation of the traitor Baradas, while his love of country dominated over all. In the last scene, when, awaking from his simulated trance, he leaped up, and, dilating to preternatural proportions, exclaimed, “There, at my feet !” he realised a picture once seen never to be forgotten. When, in this situation, he floated down the stage, I protest he always suggested

to me the Divine image grown grey and ghastly through the efflux of the ages and once more gliding over the Sea of Galilee !

For subtlety, intellectuality, and vigour his Macbeth has never been approached in our time ; and he was the only possible Lear I have ever seen. He galvanised the dull and dreary abortion of Werner into life ; while his Virginius—— But words are feeble to describe this matchless creation. In Edinburgh he wore a bald wig which made him hideous ; in Bristol he wore his own beautiful and abundant iron-grey hair curled, and certainly looked superbly handsome. His Lord Townly appeared to me affected, lachrymose, and tedious ; but his Henry IV. was of the highest order of excellence. His Othello, which I saw him act in Edinburgh, was to me the least satisfactory and impressive of his Shakespearean performances. I may here remark that he was the only actor I ever saw “make up” for the Moor with an entirely black face—a face, in fact, black as a Christy minstrel. Possibly his comparative failure in Othello may have arisen from the fact that he never liked the part—so, at least, he assured me.

Actors are not always just to each other ; but Vandenhoff once said to me, “Except Macbeth and Iago, I never cared for ‘Mac’ in Shakespeare. But I have acted Richelieu and Virginius hundreds of times ; I have seen others—good actors, too—try their hands on them ; but in these two parts we are none of us in the same century with him.”

T. P. Cooke also said to me, “I hate him ! D——n him ! I detest the growling beast ! But he can act, and

no mistake ! Kean tried to play *Virginius* after him, but he couldn't touch Mac, and threw up the part. I saw him once play *Ruthven* in a play on the subject of *Mary Stuart*, and the fellow positively so curdled my blood, that I was glad to get out of the theatre ! ”

To me the most remarkable thing about Macready, more remarkable even than his marvellous ability, was that, with all his knowledge, his skill, his culture, his accomplishments, he had never been able to eradicate his native awkwardness and angularity. To the last he could not walk or stand gracefully. It was not from lack of trying to overmaster the defect, for Phelps informed me, that, after long and fatiguing rehearsals of *Henry V.* at Drury Lane, “Mac” devoted hours to walking about the stage with “his cuisses on his thighs,” but all to no avail, for at night he tossed and tumbled about literally like a hog in armour. When he came to anchor and stood quite still, from the front point of view his right leg and knee invariably described the acute section of an angle ; but if seen from the sides, his head was thrown back till it was fully six inches out of plumb with his heels. As to fencing, he handled a foil like a pitchfork ; but the glamour of his genius blinded his auditors to these blemishes, and, in spite of them all, he was the greatest actor of his time !

The *Othello* was a triumph for me. I was proud then—I am prouder now to remember that I was permitted to try my prentice hand beside such an *Iago*. What a masterpiece that *Iago* was ! what a revelation of subtle, poetic, vigorous, manly, many-minded devilry !

The audience were more than usually kind to me. After I had got my first plunge over, I took heart of grace, and by the time I had reached the third act, I forgot that he was anything more than "mine ancient"; I remembered only that I was Othello.

Neither then nor now could I act with gloves on my hands. I had removed, as I thought, all traces of the pigment with which I had "made up" from the palms of my hands, but, as my excitement increased, the wretched stuff seemed to ooze out of my very pores. When I came to the famous speech,

Villain, be sure you prove my love, etc.

I sprang upon Iago and seized him by the throat. I remembered nothing more until I found that I had literally flung him bodily down upon the stage and was standing above him, erect and quivering with wrath. On his part, he growled like an angry lion. The incident was as unprecedented as it was unpremeditated, and its effect upon the audience was electrical. They got up and cheered, and for some time the progress of the play was interrupted. This gave me time to collect myself, when, to my horror, I perceived that, in my ungovernable rage, I had torn open Iago's vest, and, worse still, left the black marks of my fingers on his beautiful white cashmere dress. When we came off the stage, he glared at me and growled, "Err—well, sir, what have you to say?"

"I'm very sorry, sir!"

"Err—sorry, sir. By——! you sprang upon me more like a young tiger than a human being."

"I was so carried away by the passion of the scene that I forgot myself ; I must ask you to remember the novelty of the position in my being permitted to attempt so great a part beside so distinguished an actor as yourself."

"Don't humbug me, sir ! "

"I scorn to attempt it ; nevertheless, the honour you have done me to-night might well have turned an older head than mine. Pray, sir, make some allowance for my excitement."

At this he relaxed into a grim smile, and growled, "Say no more—say no more ; only remember the next time you play this part with me, confine your excitement to your mind and leave your muscles to take care of themselves ! "

Although his plays were done from night to night, they were admirably acted. Needless to say, had not the company been both numerous and efficient, they could not have been done at all.

It was not until he had finished his engagement at Bath that I ventured to reveal myself. There had been a hitch in the last scene of *Lear*, which I had the presence of mind to avert by taking it up and covering it. When the play was over, a message came requesting me to step round to his room. I expected a bullying for having dared to tamper with the text. To my astonishment he came forward and, taking me by the hand, said, "Thank you ; you—err—err—saved the—err—end of the—err—play. Err—we—err—have met before, I—err—think ? "

"Yes, in Edinburgh, on the night of the Forrest row."

"Err—yes—a miserable business ; but—err—we had met before that?"

"Yes, in the saloon of Drury Lane."

"Err—good God ! I thought so ! You were the boy with the—err—chubby cheeks and the—err—long hair, and the—err—blue frock and the—err—camlet cloak ? I thought so !"

"Did you, sir, really ?"

"Yes, really. Now listen to words of wisdom. I fear the poetic drama is dead ; if it were alive, your possibilities might be considerable. Do you know the difference between—err—talent and—err—genius ?"

"Not clearly."

"Then listen ! Genius is a misnomer. Look ! That's the difference between the—err—one and the—err—other," and he made two horizontal marks one above the other with his thumb-nail on the painted wall. "The lower line is—err—talent ; the higher—err—is the same quality cultivated to the highest standard of—err—perfection ; then it becomes—err—genius. You have reached the—err—one, but you have a long way to go before you reach the—err—other. Now remember the whole law and the prophets lie in Sir Joshua Reynolds' well-known axiom, 'Excellence was never granted to—err—man but as the reward of—err—labour.' Err—err—can I do anything to help you ?"

"Yes, I should like to go to Edinburgh for the leading business."

"Very well, call on me to-morrow at one o'clock, and I'll give you a letter to—err—Murray."



When I called the following day, I found my letter waiting ; lunch was waiting, too. The great man was in an amiable mood, and during luncheon I ventured to draw him out about some of the great actors of the past. I was near putting "my foot in it," though, at the beginning of the interview, by an indiscreet reference to Charles Kean, between whom and the eminent one little love existed. The truth was, their respective partisans were always making mischief between them. The law of dramatic copyright, too, was even in a more unsatisfactory condition then, than it is now ; hence "Mac" had no sooner popularised a work in town than Kean reaped in the country the advantage accruing from its London reputation. This was more especially the case with *The Lady of Lyons* and *Money*, in which he anticipated Macready everywhere.

"The father," said Macready, "was—err—a great man ; but the son is a—err—small one." (By the bye, this scarcely tallies with Mac's wishing to engage Charles as a member of his company.) "Yes, sir, the father was—err—a drunken blackguard ; but, oh, my ! the—err—beast could act ! There was another man who could act, but he never had a—err—chance. That was the unfortunate—err—Conway—a magnificent, specially gifted—err—creature. He was an enormous favourite in this very city, until the flattery of—err—Madame Piozzi and a number of other—err—stupid old women turned his head. When he came to town, that literary ruffian—err—Theodore Hook crucified him, and the poor fellow went to the bad altogether, went down and down, till at last he became—err—a prompter

and, I think, a—err—Methodist preacher, and ultimately committed suicide in—err—America.

“Miss O’Neil? Eh? She was youth, grace, beauty, combined with a sweetness of—err—pathos and tenderness which was—err—irresistible. Charles Young? Well, he was delightful, amusing, accomplished, sound, sensible, and scholar-like, but always—err—Charles Young. As for the Kembles, well, they—err—err—were the Kembles. John Kemble’s career finished when mine was beginning. He was stately and classic and asthmatic, and always—err—earned my admiration, but scarcely stirred a deeper—err—feeling. Charles Kemble possessed the same—err—qualities in a minor—err—degree. Elliston, now, was the most accomplished all-round—err—actor I ever saw.

“But as to what is called—err—genius, the nearest approach to what I understand that—err—to be was to be found in—err—Mrs. Jordan and—err—err—Mrs. Siddons. I was a youth when I met these wonderful—err—women, and I acted with them both in—err—my father’s theatre at Newcastle-on-Tyne. I played with Mrs. Jordan in—err—*The Child of Nature*. She was a gorgeous creature, buoyant, ebullient, delicious—in fact, she was—err—comedy incarnate! With Mrs. Siddons I played Young—err—Norval and—err—Beverley. Although past the meridian of life, in beauty and in grandeur she was—err—beyond anything you can—err—imagine—a queen, a goddess—no, not quite—err—err—a goddess, else she could never have descended to that—err—err—miserable little scrub of a low comedian husband! But, oh! my God! her—err—Isabella

and her—err—Mrs. Beverley ! But we'll talk about this some other time, for here—err—comes my man, and I must be off if—err—I am to catch the train. Now remember what I've said to you ! Be a good boy ; steer clear of—err—err—women and wine, and bad company. By-bye, and—err—good luck ! ”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### "MY LADY GORGEOUS"

Macready invites me to Liverpool—Mrs. "Mac" not only refuses Permission, but declines to confirm my Winter Engagement for Bath and Bristol, and I am compelled to descend to the Worcester Circuit—The Mysterious "Agnes"—I accompany "My Lady Gorgeous" and Madame *Mère* to Town—My Sister and "The Fair Maid of Kensington"—Madame *Mère* gives me my *Congé*—Samson and Delilah—I receive a Proposal of Marriage and am booked—The Theatres—The Marylebone and G. V. Brooke—The Strand—William Farren (*The Cock Salmon*)—Harry (Nellie Farren's Father) and William, Junior—The Great Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Stirling, Leigh Murray, and Henry Compton—The Opera and the Tight Boot, and what came of it—*The Honeymoon*—The Duchess and the Duke's Nose—The Maid is off to the Norfolk Broads—The House in Frith Street—The "Duke" speaks his Mind in Soho Square.

SIX weeks later Mr. Macready did me the honour to telegraph me to go to Liverpool to play the opposite parts with him there. This would have been a splendid lift up for me ; but Mrs. Macready could not, or would not, let me go—at least not then, though she did let me go soon afterwards. She had promised me an increase of salary for the ensuing season, and when I reminded her of her promise, she forgot it, or, at any rate, alleged she did. As I was obstinate on the point, I had to look elsewhere for an engagement, which was awkward, inasmuch as arrangements had long been completed for

the ensuing winter season in all the important theatres. My loss was another man's gain, for that excellent actor, George Melville, stepped into my shoes, and (since nothing is so evanescent as a player's popularity) soon took my place in the estimation of the public.

Then came the advent of a constellation of rising actors, who, under the able guidance of James Chute (who had now taken the helm), made the Bristol theatre famous. There were the Terrys, *père et mère*, Kate and Ellen; my old managers the Robertsons, Mrs. Tom Robertson, Margaret Robertson (now Mrs. Kendal), Marie Wilton (Lady Bancroft), Henrietta Hodson (now Mrs. Labouchere), Margaret Eburne, Miss Cleveland, Arthur Stirling, the brothers Rignold (William and George), Charles Coghlan, Fosbrooke, Arthur Wood, etc.

Finding myself, through the misunderstanding with Mrs. Macready, shut out of the important provincial theatres, and nothing better offering in town than a part in Charles Reade's play of *Gold* at Drury Lane, or an engagement at the Surrey, neither of which were compatible with my ambitious views, I had to fall back on the Worcester circuit, to which Mr. Bennett had invited me, offering me as an inducement to take the stage management (a branch of the art which I had already commenced to study seriously), an unusually large salary (for him!), and half the receipts of a benefit in each town, or rather, to be precise, *two* benefits in Worcester (where we had *two* seasons) and one each in Shrewsbury and Coventry. Calculating on my engagement in Bristol, I had already

contracted with the Barnetts to return to Ryde, Guildford, and Reading, and had now to appeal to their consideration to grant me my *cong  * at Ryde, so as to enable me to join Bennett at the commencement of the Worcester season. They were dear old people, and granted my request most graciously.

This narrative is not intended to be a *Liber Amantis*, but, as it is a faithful transcript of the lights and shades, the sweets as well as the bitters of a life, 'twould be incomplete without the record of that which sanctified and made it precious. The morning after my benefit at Bristol, I had an unexpected visitor at my rooms in Queen's Square, in the shape of a charming girl of sixteen, who turned out to be no other than my mysterious correspondent "Agnes" from Cardiff. All blushes and confusion, she had some difficulty in explaining the object of her visit. Her mother was dead, her father was a rough and tough old sea-dog of a captain in the East India Company's service. She had no relatives save a maiden aunt of an ascetic turn of mind, who lived on College Green. The poor child's life had been lonely and barren till the night she saw *Romeo and Juliet* in Cardiff, when Shakespeare's muse of fire (and possibly the cunning of the players) opened a new world to her. She now knew the play by heart, had made an elaborate study of the love-lorn maid, and ingenuously proposed that she should accompany me on my travels as my Juliet! When I explained to her that this was utterly impossible, she left me assuring me that I was "not Romeo at all, but a barbarous, hard-hearted, inhuman young monster!" Poor dear! five-and-twenty years

later, when she had become a happy wife and mother, and I had left my Romeo days long behind, we laughed heartily at the remembrance of this youthful folly.

I had not seen my sisters or brothers for years. One of the girls was at school at Kirkby Lonsdale, the other was completing (under the guardianship of her benefactress, the sweet Lady Belper) her studies at Queen's College, Harley Street. One of the boys was at St. Anne's School; the other (thanks to a generous friend's influence with her brother, a shipping magnate of Liverpool) was serving his articles at sea aboard *The Annie Cropper*, from which the airy youth levanted as soon as she cast anchor at San Francisco.

Having a month's vacation before returning to Ryde, and a few pounds to spare, I resolved upon a holiday in town. On the day of my departure, who should I meet at the station but my fair friend “Lady Gorgeous” and her grim mother, both bound Londonward. Of course, I constituted myself their escort, divided my sandwiches and liquid refreshment with them, packed them into a cab at the end of the journey, and promised to look them up at the earliest opportunity.

Sunday I devoted to my sister, who was on a visit to the mistress of Kensington High School for Girls. Naturally I anticipated finding the presiding genius of this seminary a severe and mature dragon of propriety, ruling her fair but fractious pupils with a rod of iron. To my astonishment, and, I may add, to my infinite relief, I found instead a delicate, elegant girl of nineteen, sunny-haired, blue-eyed, and soft-voiced, doing the honours

of the house with a grace and charm which made me feel at home the moment I placed my feet under her mahogany. She had been kept pretty well posted in my affairs, thanks to my sister Annie, who had recounted them for her fair friend's delectation. Apart from her devotion to me, Annie had a florid imagination, and my adventures lost nothing in the telling. Maria (that was our hostess's name) had a dearly loved brother (an only one) of my own age, who had struggled against trials severer even than mine, but, not having my strength to surmount them, had gone down in the strife, leaving nothing but regrets and tears to bedew an early grave. And so it came to pass that instead of one, I found two sisters awaiting me that day. Time passed pleasantly, passed quickly; and when ten o'clock came, and I had to turn out to catch the last 'bus to town, it seemed as if my visit, instead of lasting ten hours, had occupied barely ten minutes. I only remember three things during those ten hours: the first, an impertinent question; the second, a puppyish answer; the third, a remarkable incident.

"Brother mine," quoth my audacious sister, "have you ever been in love?"

"Sister mine!" I replied, with modest assurance, "a man filled with a sublime ambition has no time to fall in love!"

"Oh, indeed!" With that the artful hussy plucked out a tortoisehell comb from her friend's abundant tresses, which tumbled down to her very heels in a shower of gold, while she significantly exclaimed, "Then I'll go bail you never saw a crop of *tow* like this before?"



She was right—I never had seen one like it before, nor have I ever seen one like it since.

Next day I called on my “Lady Gorgeous” at her rooms in Bryanston Square. She was alone and heartily glad to see me. I had barely been there ten minutes, when madame *mère*, who had been out marketing, burst into the room, and, regarding me with baleful looks, intimated in the fewest words possible that she preferred my room to my company, and, finally, that neither she nor her daughter desired any further intercourse with me. Without a word I took my hat, and, bowing myself out with as much dignity as I could command under such circumstances, made my way to the Marble Arch and thence to Kensington, where the warmest welcome contrasted strongly with my Arctic reception at Bryanston Square.

Time sped all too quickly. A week had elapsed when, one fine morning, at or about nine o’clock, just as I was getting into my tub, came a rat-tat at the door of my bedroom.

“Laidy and gent downstairs in the drorring-room to see you, sir!” sang out the slavey.

“What lady, Polly?”

“Dun know, sir; but she’s a stunner, she is! and byutiful as a butterfly—only there’s more of her!”

While I was wondering who my visitor could be at this unearthly hour, a well-known voice, regardless of grammar, called out from below, “It’s only me, Jack!”

"What! Gwen?"

"Yes, Gwen! I want you particularly, so hurry up!"

"All right! Down in a minute!"

As I slipped into my clothes, I began to wonder what was the matter. "Jack," too! She had never called me "Jack" before. What could it all mean? I wasn't left long in doubt. When I got downstairs, I found her chafing with impatience.

"This is cousin Bob!" she said, indicating a gentlemanly lad of seventeen. "The mater wouldn't let me out alone, and so I had to bring him. Oh! he's all right—we can trust him. Can't we, Bob?"

"You bet!" replied the lad.

"We've no time to lose, so slip your boots on, and let's be off at once! I've something important to say to you. Step out as far as the Park."

Passing rapidly over Westminster Bridge, by the Abbey, through St. Anne's Gate, we found ourselves in the Park.

"That'll do, Bob!" she ejaculated impatiently. "Off with you to the Marble Arch! I'll pick you up there!"

The lad answered to heel like a pointer, and off he marched towards the *rendezvous*.

"What's up?" I inquired.

"A row!"

"A row?"

"Yes, a row with the mater about you."

"About me!"

"Yes! She says you're anything but a gentleman."

That put my back up. I slanged her back, and then she gave me snakes. The house ain't big enough to hold us both—so look here, Jack, if you'll marry me, I'll marry you !”

The proposal absolutely took my breath away. Marriage! Great Scott! I'd never dreamt of such a thing! Without waiting for a reply, she continued, “You go to Ryde on the 30th. Write to the Barnetts at once and get me an engagement. I'll do anything—I don't care what, so long as I am with you. I'll manage to pack up, and Bob will get my traps off to the goods station on the quiet, and come with me to the Registry Office on the 29th. Then on we go to Turkey—no, I mean to Ryde—together for our honeymoon! You see, I've arranged everything. Now cut your stick and get your breakfast; and, mind, Thursday 29th, here, ten o'clock.”

Before I could get in a word edgeways she was out of sight! The position was not only novel, but astounding. She was so magnificent a creature; her animal magnetism was so overpowering; above all, she was so honest, so fearless, and had such an intense belief in my honour and her own, that, upon my soul, it seemed to me as if some informal yet binding betrothal had already taken place between us. At this distance the arrangement appears absurd to the verge of impossibility; but at the time it was invested with a terrible earnestness, the more remarkable because I had never contemplated the possibility of such an occurrence. We had been merely comrades, nothing more. Of course, she was a year or two older, and that counts

for a good deal in arrangements of this kind. The theory universally prevails that

Man, the lawless libertine, may rove  
Unquestioned thro' the flowery wilds of love ;  
While woman, sense and nature's easy fool, etc.,

inevitably comes to grief but ; *il y fagot et fagot* ; men are not all "lawless libertines." The blackguard "amuses himself and rides away" to other conquests, but the decent fellow with a sympathetic heart gets "left." He is but too frequently tackled by some strong-minded virgin who gets him in a corner and demands "to know his intentions." If he escapes this formidable Scylla, he founders upon an even more dangerous Charybdis, in the person of some delicate but delusive Delilah, who pretends to have fallen captive to his many fascinations ; then woe for poor Samson, for his hair is cropped there and then !

I am not suggesting that *la grande* Gwendolen was first-cousin to the treacherous syren who delivered her poor, purblind dupe bound hand and foot to the Philistines. No ! I was the victim of circumstances. Had not the weather been so cold during those nightly journeys to and from the city of King Bladud ; had I not been stupidly tender-hearted ; had my martial cloak not proved so ample and so accommodating, I should never have been landed in this *impasse*. I had learnt, however, now what I ought to have known from the first—a man cannot play with fire without burning his fingers. Liking ! Oh yes, of course ! But love, no ! "Not enough to put on the point of a knife and choke a

daw withal.” If I had not exactly made my bed myself, it had certainly been made for me, and it seemed but too probable that I must sleep on it!

Meanwhile Kensington and the *chatelaine* thereof drew me daily to the High Street. My sister Nelly had now joined us, and I had to take the girls to the Academy or the theatre—to the Marylebone, where G. V. Brooke was “the bright particular star.” Hither we went nightly, assured of a warm welcome, to see him in *Othello*, *King John*, and *William Tell*, or to the Strand, over which William Farren, the elder, then presided with old comedies represented by the great Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Sterling, Mrs. Leigh Murray, Leigh Murray, Compton, Henry and William Farren, junior, etc.

Sometimes there was a box for the Opera.

“The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley,” and one memorable night a tight boot and a match-making sister changed the current of my destiny. The fact was, Annie had made up her mind from the very first that her friend and I were “made for each other,” and that confounded tight boot helped her to carry out her insidious project. By this time my little nest-egg was melting away, and in order to enable me to provide a growler to take the girls to Covent Garden, I tried to save sixpence (all ’buses, even from Charing Cross to Wellington Street, were sixpence then) by walking from Westminster to Kensington in a new pair of patent leather dress-boots. Imagine five miles of this in a claw-hammer, a gibus, and white choker, in the glare of a midsummer sun! By the time I reached High Street, I was in an agony of pain. When we sat down

to dinner, the first thing I did was to smuggle my poor foot under the table and to extricate it from the inferno in which it had been compressed during that terrible tramp from Westminster. To get a boot off is one thing ; to get it on, especially when the foot is swollen to twice its normal dimensions, is another. All my efforts were in vain. It was quite evident "there could be no Opera for me that night," and those designing sisters of mine arranged for their friend to stay and keep me company while they went to Covent Garden.

Apart from her youth, her beauty, her amiability, this young lady was an interesting personality. To begin with, she was an orphan, had delicate health, and was utterly unfitted for the superintendence and the drudgery of a great scholastic institution. It was obvious that it was already beginning to tell upon her. I sympathised with her deeply ; sympathy begets confidence. She expressed an ingenuous desire for emancipation ; I expressed an equally ingenuous regret at my inability to play Perseus to her Andromeda. One word led to another, and I was led to explain why I couldn't play the emancipator, and so, little by little, the story leaked out of the other lady's visit to my rooms, the interview in the Park, and the approaching elopement. Then it was the turn of my fair hostess to sympathise. She pitied me sincerely, and we know what pity is akin to. I had no more intention of trifling with the feelings of either of these charming girls than of asking them in marriage ; yet circumstances (including that tight boot) conspired to make me feel as if I were behaving like a cad to both.

"We are the slaves of time and error." Her sym-

pathy led me on, and so I inquired, “Should anything occur, may I——”

“Well—well, she would think of it ! ”

By the time we had got to this stage, my sisters had returned from the Opera full of the triumphs of Grisi and Mario in *Les Huguenots*, to take part in a banquet of stewed rabbit and Spanish onions, a punch bowl of iced lemonade, and a salad of my mixing (one of my small accomplishments). Then came the boot, the horrible boot ! It was utterly intractable. There was no help for it. I had to stay the night ! In the morning the poor foot was worse than ever, so I had to invest in a pair of slippers, which cost me six shillings. I had saved sixpence and lost six shillings—nay, ten ; for I had to spend four shillings for a cab home. But “she ! the fair, the chaste, the inexpressive, she ! ” had promised that if anything occurred I might—— That was something to look forward to.

Early next morning I had a visit from my new friend Bob, who called with a box for the Soho, where my “Lady Gorgeous” had arranged to exploit herself that night as Juliana in an amateur performance of *The Honeymoon*. She was particularly anxious, so Bob said, that my sisters should see their “future sister-in-law.” What was to be done ? It was utterly impossible for me with my poor tortured foot to get up to Kensington, so I despatched Bob with a message to my lady to that effect, slipped into a dressing-gown and slippers, adjourned to the sofa and *The Caxtons*. At about half-past seven, when I had lost myself in that delicious book, up again turns the irrepressible Bob in a hansom.

"Oh, look here, old chap," says he in his airy way, "I've been to Kensington and taken the ladies to the Play, and they've sent me for you, so look sharp—cab's at the door!"

Obviously there was nothing for it but to obey, slip on my dress-clothes, and get to Soho as quickly as I could. By the time I arrived the first two acts were over. My lady was more "gorgeous" than ever in her bridal array, which had evidently impressed the girls more favourably than she did. I rather think Master Bob must have blabbed. Anyhow, the "other one" took the opportunity of letting slip the observation *sotto voce*, "So that's the lady! Plenty of her and to spare, anyhow!"

There was nothing remarkable about the performance, save the duke and the duke's nose. His grace was a queer-looking little object of any age from seventy to a hundred, whose nasal organ was "fearfully and wonderfully made." It appeared as if it had been originally compounded from a chunk of dough or putty, which had overflowed and blobbed out in every direction, while it got scorched in the process of baking. The girls were utterly fogged by the abnormal shape and dimensions of this proboscis and by the contrast between my "Lady Gorgeous" and her Lilliputian lord and master. It will be remembered that in three or four acts of this play the hero disguises himself in the garb of a peasant, while in the last scene, at a critical moment, he appears in gorgeous array in his real character, that of the Duke of Aranza. When he had cast aside his disguise, the nose still remained in evidence, and, in the innocence of their hearts, the ladies



inquired in chorus, "Why doesn't the old idiot take off his nose?"

It was in vain I assured them that that wonderful protuberance was a product of nature and not a work of art. They were quite convinced it would come off, and were grievously disappointed that it didn't.

School was over, holidays on, and next day the fair maid of Kensington had to leave town on a visit to some friends in Norfolk. Courtesy demanded that I should make my adieux, so I accompanied my sisters to see her off at London Bridge. It is my firm impression that those young hussies knew exactly how the land lay; anyhow, they artfully contrived to leave us a moment or two by ourselves, and then——

"Yes! she would certainly think of it."

And off went the steamboat.

Meanwhile, the fateful day was rapidly approaching. Before I was out of bed on the 29th, Bob came with a note from Gwen postponing our appointment at the Registry Office, but asking me to meet her without fail that evening at six o'clock at a certain house in Frith Street, Soho. This communication put me in a flutter, and I was all impatience till night came. As the hour struck, I was at the door of the house in Frith Street. On presenting my card, I was shown into the first floor drawing-room by a man in livery. On entering, I found myself confronted by madame *mère*, black as thunder, by Gwendolen, flushed and defiant, and by His Grace the Duke of Aranza and his grace's nose. He appeared embarrassed; I was really very much so; while

madame was only too evidently angry. Indeed, the only person of the whole party who retained absolute self-possession was my "Lady Gorgeous." Advancing to me, she put her arms round my neck and deliberately kissed me full upon the lips; then, addressing His Grace, she said, not altogether without a certain dignity, but with a certain air of proprietary right, "This is my *fiancé*."

This announcement stirred up madam *mère* to an explosion, and she let fly at me without circumlocution. I was the "quintessence of profligacy, a gay Lothario, a notorious traducer and seducer of women, an adventurer, a swindler, but an actor—quotha! no, never! If her unfortunate daughter was mad enough to cast in her lot with such a wandering vagabond, why, God help her! The result would be ruin, disgrace, misery, and a brood of paupers—yes, paupers—sir, paupers!"

As she gasped for lack of breath, the old gentleman interjected rather brusquely, "Oh, shut up!" Then, turning to me, he resumed, "I think sir, if you were to walk with me for ten minutes round Soho Square, we might see a way out of this quagmire."

I paused irresolute; Gwendolen kissed me again and said, "Go, dear."

"Yes, go! Go to the devil!" added the furious mother.

That ten minutes' interview in Soho Square extended over two hours, and was one of the most momentous in my life. Briefly told, His Grace informed me that he was Gwendolen's guardian; that both she and her

mother were entirely dependent upon him for subsistence ; that, apart from the old lady's objections, our youth and other circumstances would render a marriage at present the height of imprudence ; but that, if Gwendolen and I were of the same mind twelve months later, he would not only withdraw his opposition, but would consent to our union, and undertake to provide for the mother. On the other hand, if we ran counter to his wishes, we must not look to him for help.

“Look to *you* for help ! You, sir ! whom I don't know from Adam !” I blurted out. “How dare you think I could ever descend to that !”

“Keep cool—keep cool—don't excite yourself, young gentleman ! Think ! What is to become of the old woman ? As sure as you marry this obstinate girl, so sure the old cat will have to go to the workhouse, for *I'll have nothing to do with her*. Now come, come, be reasonable ; think it over !”

I did think it over ; and the more I thought of it, the more I became of his way of thinking. Perhaps, too, I was thinking of some one else down on the Norfolk Broads.

“I suppose I may go and say good-bye ?” I inquired.

“Better not ; there would sure to be another row, and you're better out of it.”

“Well, I may write to Gwen, anyhow ?”

“By all means write—reams if you like ; and if you don't change your mind twelve months hence, rely on me ! If you do—why, thank God for a lucky escape from a bad bargain !” With that we shook hands and parted.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### *THE NEW ERA! MACREADY'S FAREWELL*

Off to the Isle of Wight—A Prophetic Glimpse of Australia, in Anticipation of Macaulay's New Zealander—Harry Craven—Alexander Henderson and the Nelson Family—"Coming Events cast their Shadows before!" Henderson tempts Fortune, when a Momentous Performance takes Place—What can be done with Fifty Pounds—A Retrospect—Forty Years Ago—A New Era in London and Liverpool—The Avatar of Tom Robertson—The Result of making a Pound and spending a Guinea—With the Blondes in America—Back in the Little Village—At the Criterion with Wyndham and *Brighton*—In "The Folly" with Robinson Crusoe—Bonnie Lydia—"Lal" Brough and Edouin—At the Comedy—With Leslie and "Rip"—*The Mascotte*, Violet Cameron, and Capoul—A Last Look at Alexander the First—Back at the Worcester Circuit—"Off with the Old Love and on with the New"—I play the Part of "Benedick the Married Man" with—"But that's telling!"—Macready's Farewell—His Funeral.

THE next day I went to the Island alone. My friend Harry Craven, the dramatist, who for some years was a conspicuous feature in the Ryde programme, was already there, and that very season his career, like my own, was shaped by accident.

I once came across, in an edition of Shakespeare edited by a parson, some lines written while yet Australia was a penal settlement, and consequently long before the famous "New Zealander" dawned on the prophetic horizon of Thomas Babington Macaulay. The lines ran thus :

When Albion's most high and mighty State  
Hath reached the mortal limit marked by fate,  
When arts and science fly her naked shore,  
And the world's Empress shall be great no more,  
Then Australasia shall thy sway prolong,  
And her rich cities echo with thy song ;  
While myriads unborn shall laugh or shed the tear  
At Falstaff's humour or the woes of Lear !

These lines, the gold discoveries, and the future of Australasia haunted me day and night, and I was continually dinning them into the ears of any one and every one I could induce to listen to me. First came Brooke, Sullivan, Charles Mathews, and Charles Kean, who doubtless wished me at the deuce at the moment, but who went to Australia notwithstanding ! Next came Craven's turn.

Now during my last season at Bristol, amongst our raw recruits was the son of a distinguished music publisher and composer in Soho, who was also father of three or four charming daughters : all were more or less accomplished vocalists. Alfred Nelson (recently professor of elocution at the Guildhall School of Music) was an admirer of mine, and had an all too flattering estimate of my abilities. ("When did flattery ever fall unheeded on an actor's ear?") Hence, when he besought me to obtain an engagement for him in the Isle of Wight, I did so. During his stay at Ryde, his elder sister came down to see him. That accidental visit led to her becoming Mr. Craven, with the result that Harry and all the Nelson family ultimately migrated to Australasia where they attained fame, and Harry, I am happy to say, obtained fortune ; while I, who suggested the

Australian idea to so many people, have never been there yet.

Nor was this the only potential consequence accruing from that accidental *rencontre* at Ryde. Ten or twelve years later, during the fulfilment of an engagement in Liverpool, I happened to be passing through Clayton Square and, noting that the old Concert Hall there was being transmogrified, I inquired of one of the men, "What are you up to here?"

"Going t' mek t'owd shop into a theatur, sur!"

"Oh indeed! And pray who's the manager?"

"I dunna reetly know his name. But he's a long yallar chap from Australy."

That "long yallar chap" had (so he told me afterwards) been at the Antipodes, where he became acquainted with the Nelson family, had married the elder daughter, and drifted into management. His name was Alexander Henderson, and he was father of the astute young gentleman who at this moment is the proprietor of the Fulham Theatre, manager of the Criterion, Wyndham's, and the New Theatre, St. Martin's Lane, for his father's friend and partner, Charles Wyndham. Ten or twelve years after he had transformed the Clayton Square Concert Hall to the Prince of Wales' Theatre, Alexander Henderson came to say good-bye to me in Manchester, ere he sailed on the morrow, with the lovely Lydia Thompson, the ebullient Pauline Markham, and the rest of the beautiful blondes who made such a stir in America. I took him home to my diggin's and put him up for the night. After supper he recounted the story of his start in Liverpool, which, as it

inaugurated a new departure in provincial theatricals, I give in his own words.

"When I returned to my native town after twenty years' absence, I didn't quite know which way to turn for a living. I looked round at the theatres and found 'Old Stick in the Mud' bossing it everywhere. You 'Tragedy Jacks' were in the ascendant, Barry Sullivan in one theatre, you in the other with your fusty, musty old Shakespeare. Oh! it's no use turning up your nose! I can't abide your blatant old Bard, and as for his beastly blank verse, it always gives me the blues!

"Well, when I went up to town, I found Phelps grumbling and growling at the Lane, old Ben spluttering at the Adelphi, and Bucky and a lot of old fossils grinning and gagging at the Haymarket. The only things that appealed to me were Harry Byron's bright burlesques at the Strand, where Marie Wilton had already made her mark. Johnnie Clarke, Fanny Josephs, Ada Swanboro', Kate Carson, and the rest were all coming to the fore. Mind you, the 'Dust Hole' had not yet been transformed to the Prince of Wales. Bancroft at that time was unheard of, Tom Robertson was going about with *Society* (which no one would look at) tucked under his arm. Now we had nothing like the Strand in Liverpool, and burlesque, except an occasional dose of *Bombastes Furioso*, and the pantomime was practically unknown.

"In Australia, while travelling with the Nelsons, we had to vamp up all kinds of musical entertainments, and the diggers liked 'em. Why shouldn't we try 'em in Liverpool? Besides, there were the girls, who, like

myself, couldn't get a look in anywhere ; so I made up my mind, if I could only get a theatre, to have a flutter. I soon spotted the old hall in Clayton Square, which was going begging : had a 'bit of ready,' got an option, made the place decent, christened it the Prince of Wales, opened, tried all kinds of attractions, but whatever I tried failed. *The Colleen Bawn* had been a draw everywhere else, but with me it was a ghastly failure. Things got from bad to worse. We had reached the rosy time before Christmas. 'The Ghost' didn't walk on Saturday, so there was nothing for it but to shut up shop till Boxing night. Even then, it was a lively look-out for us, with three pantomimes in full blast, while we had nothing but the unfortunate *Colleen Bawn* to fall back upon. On Boxing Day I was at the last gasp—utterly cleaned out, save for one solitary sixpence ! Night came, the doors were opened. They might as well have remained shut, for not a soul, good, bad, or indifferent, came near us !

"I gave it up as a bad job, retired to my den, lay down on the sofa in the dark, and dubitated for half an hour as to what was best to do. There were two ways out of the hole—either to cut my stick or to cut my throat. Cut my stick, where to ? If I even knew where to go, how was I to get there ? No, that was impossible ! As for the other arrangement, my razors were right enough, but it would have made such a deuce of a mess and would be such a triumph for 'Old Stick in the Mud' and you 'Tragedy Jacks !' Still, needs must when the devil—— 'Hallo ! what in the name of thunder's that ?'



"Tramp—tramp! the boys came marching—marching in! Yes, by the living Jingo! in they came dribbling to all parts of the house! I rushed out, battled through the throng, made my way to Williamson Square, and found there was an overflow from the pantomime at the Royal. Hallelujah! hallelujah! light and land at last! As you know, I'm fairly abstemious, and detest raw spirits; but I staggered into the first dram-shop with my last sixpence, bought a bottom of brandy, swallowed it at a gulp, and was a man again. That night we turned £100. Half I devoted to the company, appropriated the other half to myself, and caught the midnight mail for town. Fifty pounds were never so well expended. There was a brougham at the door of the Tavistock from morning to night—champagne luncheons here, sumptuous dinners there, whiskeys and sodas and cigars everywhere. In forty-eight hours I had engaged Toole and Paul Bedford (who had been banished Liverpool by 'Old Stick in the Mud'); secured Sothern, who had just 'knocked 'em' with *Dundreary*; collared Charlie Mathews; nailed the Strand company with the Byron burlesques; more important still, I had arranged for Tom Robertson's first comedy *Society*, produced it, broke down the barriers, and opened the doors which led him to fame and fortune!

"So you see that miserable £50 led to the dawning of a new era in Liverpool. 'Old Stick in the Mud' gave himself mighty airs, held the press at arm's length: they both hated and feared him. I got at 'em, lunched 'em, and punched 'em (not their heads, but their tummies), dined 'em and wine'd 'em, and chumm'd

with 'em, and they stood by me like one man. For ten or twelve years I had a monopoly of the comedy stars and burlesques, and carried everything before me."

"You forget my pantomime *The Yellow Dwarf* and *L'Africaine*!" I interjected.

"No, I don't; but I counter'd and got Frank Burnand to write me a new version of *L'Africaine*, and we did it quite as well as yours. As for the pantomime, I admit you had me there; but you only did one panto, and when you were out of the hunt, I had it all my own way, had I only known how to use it! But it's a bad game to make a pound and spend a guinea, as I dare say you've learnt by this time, and so at last came my Moscow and you, you young beggar! You! who saw the beginning, were in at the death! Yes, confound you! You were turning money from the doors with your brutal *Never Too Late To Mend*, and your beastly broad arrows, and your crowd of cropped heads, when I came a cropper. But I'm going to pick it all up again. You'll see, laddie—you'll see!"

I did see: and he did "pick it all up again!" With Charles Wyndham and *Brighton* at the Criterion; with *Robinson Crusoe*, Lydia Thompson, Lal Brough, and Willie Edouin at the Folly. Then, in conjunction with his friend Addison, he built the Comedy, coined money with *Rip Van Winkle* and Fred Leslie—with *The Mascotte*, Capoul, and Violet Cameron. At length, just when he was in sight of port, poor Aleck went down! The last time I ever saw him he came tottering up the Haymarket, bent double and leaning

heavily on a stick, while I came racing down in the opposite direction. He paused and gazed at me in open-mouthed wonder.

"There you are," he gasped, "there you are—rattling along like a two-year-old at six miles an hour, while I! . . . I've had to have my wretched back 'ironed' before I got up this morning, and now I can scarcely drag myself up the street, while *you*! How *do* you manage it?"

"Well, dear boy, you can't have everything! You are a distinguished metropolitan manager, while I am a poor disbanded player, driven as a last resource to the ink-pot!"

"Well, anyhow, come round and help me crack a bottle of sparkling!"

Whatever Alexander Henderson's shortcomings were, lack of hospitality was not one of them. For the rest, let his faults lie gently on him.

After this long digression, I must hark back to my own affairs. I wrote every week to my lady, and at first received gushing epistles in reply. By degrees, however, they ceased to gush; then they ceased altogether, until at last there came a note to this effect:

"After mature consideration, I have arrived at the conclusion that you never loved me, and I have therefore decided to reward my old friend and guardian's long and ardent attachment. We are to be married on Wednesday next. May I therefore ask you to return my letters and the lock of hair I gave you the day you left London?"

All passion is finite (not that the *tendresse* in this

case ever attained that altitude). Happy are they who can strew roses and forget-me-nots on the graves of old friendships, instead of desecrating them with thorns and briars ! I love the roses, cherish the forget-me-nots, and loathe the thorns and briars.

In the cloisters of Worcester Cathedral lies a slab of stone on which is inscribed, with neither date, comment, nor text, but one word, "Miserrimus." On this sad epitaph Harry Craven had written a play which he gave me, with permission to act in the city of its origin. I did it for my Benefit, when it attracted a crowded house, but it made no mark, save one certainly not anticipated by the author. I was the miserable hero of this miserable play. At that time I had a realistic craze, and, in order to "pile up the agony" in my death scene, induced a sympathetic chemist to charge a caoutchouc capsule with liquid cochineal, which I slipped into my mouth and cracked at the critical moment of dissolution, with the result that a crimson stream burst forth from my lips, overflowed upon my shirt and tunic, horrifying even the actors as well as the auditors, all of whom arrived at the conclusion that I had veritably burst a blood-vessel ! The curtain had scarcely descended amidst a general exclamation of horror, when round rushed the manager with hair on end "like quills upon the fretful porcupine !" accompanied by the two principal physicians of the town in a similar state of perturbation.

"Where is this unhappy boy ?" gasped Bennett.

"Here I am ! As large as life and twice as natural !"

I replied, jumping up with alacrity and laughing heartily. "Fine effect, isn't it, governor?"

"Effect be d——d, sir! Another of your beastly innovations! You ought to be ashamed of yourself harrowing people in this manner!"

Mr. Bennett was right, and as I never tried that effect again, that was the first and last night of *Miserrimus*.

From Worcester we went to Shrewsbury, where a new leading lady joined us, an accomplished and admirable actress, and a woman of marvellous beauty. Miss Dorrington was the first wife of Terry O'Rourke. Like the Hanoverian gentleman referred to so delicately by that dear, good Lady Esmond (your very good women are always kind to a frail sister, especially when she happens to be as beautiful as Beatrix), Terry "liked 'em all built that way." It will be remembered that Mrs. O'Rourke No. 2 was of abnormal dimensions, while No. 1 was probably the most superbly proportioned creature that ever put foot on the stage. Mr. Reynolds, the principal old man of the company, desirous of giving his daughter Jane an opportunity for distinction, induced La Dorrington to concede the part of *Esmeralda*, and for this night only to disport herself as "Captain Phœbus de Chateaupers." As the hapless Quasimodo I was standing at the side when she entered. Entered, did I say? She strode down the stage like a young war-horse. No words can describe the grace, the ease, the matchless charm of that entrance, and certainly none can do justice to the superb ebullience of that glowing and gorgeous apparition. We were all, or nearly all, men of inches, but we were insignificant beside her.

A night or two afterwards we played *The Lady of Lyons*, and in descanting on my amorous endearments as Claude and enlarging upon the amplitude of the charms of Pauline, a gentleman on the local press had the good taste to describe the incident of the farewell in the fourth act as "the struggles of a shrimp lost on the bosom of a whale!" Instead of horse-whipping the scoundrel (which I would have done could I have laid hands on the fellow!), our sapient manager dismissed my beautiful Pauline, who left us accompanied by the regrets of the whole company.

After a month's stay in Coventry, the time approached which was destined to mark an epoch in my life. On returning "my lady's" letters and that lock of hair, I ventured, "after mature consideration," to remind the fair maid of Kensington of the confidences exchanged upon the memorable occasion when that tight boot prevented our visit to the opera, and so—yes, so it came to pass that, by a remarkable coincidence, on one Friday night I enacted Tangent in *The Way to get Married*, and on Monday night I played *Macbeth*. Whether the coming event unstrung my nerves or not, I am unable to say; but certain it is that in the Murder Scene my overwrought imagination conjured up "the air-hung dagger!" which led me to Duncan's chamber. I saw it as clearly as I see the lines I am now writing, and when exclaiming, "Come! let me clutch thee!" I "suited the action to the word," my eyes flashed fire, and I fell senseless on the stage! Finding that I lay there prone and apparently unconscious, it occurred to the prompter to drop the curtain, but our manager, who

was behind looking after the red fire for the Incantation Scene, had a sublime inspiration.

"Strike the bell!" said he.

Now this bell was one of a peal which he had picked up a bargain. It was a deep-toned, sonorous thing, and could be heard in the market-place above, or the barracks below the theatre. The expedient answered to a miracle. The moment I heard the sound, it recalled me to consciousness, and, springing to my feet, I exclaimed,

I go and it is done. The bell invites me :  
Hear it not, Duncan—for it is a knell  
Which summons thee to Heaven or to Hell!"

and made my exit amidst "thunders of applause."

Had I believed in omens, this occurrence would have daunted me ; but I am of Hamlet's mind, and had long arrived at the conclusion that "there is a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow!" After the play I travelled to Rugby by the Express, and there, in the very place where I had sought shelter under a haystack on the night I left Macready at Drury Lane, I slept in "the best inn's best bed." In the morning I turned out "fresh as paint" ; left by the first train for Kegworth, where two young gentlemen I had never encountered before met me at the station with a fly and took me to their father's house, where I found those artful sisters of mine had "stage-managed" the nuptials. The bride was waiting in bridal attire—orange blossoms, etc.; a father had been improvised to give her away ; there were bridesmaids (themselves) got up in gorgeous array ; best man—in point of fact, everything but the bride-

groom, who arrived to the moment to take his place in the ceremony. The stage management was so perfect that one might have surmised special arrangements had been made for the purpose, even with the clerk of the weather, for the day was an ideal one. The fateful words were spoken, the bells chimed joyously, the whole village turned out to wish us joy, the school children strewed our path with flowers, when we emerged from the village church into the pretty churchyard illumined by the blessed sunshine.

It is amazing how much our destinies depend upon sheer accident ; we go up one street or down another, and "brush shoulders with Fate" as she hurries past. From that day forth for thirty years of varying vicissitudes I blessed that "tight boot," for it is just possible, had it not been for that, I might not have had the dearest friend, companion, adviser that ever blessed a man's pilgrimage through life.

On returning to my duties in Coventry, I opened in Doricourt. I thought I had kept my secret well ; but I suppose "the birds of the air must have carried the matter," for when I made my re-entry, rallying Sir George Touchwood, exclaiming, "Married! *you* married! you, who in Paris said such things of the sex, in London are a married man?" there was a roar of delighted recognition of the auspicious event which had become rife on every one's tongue.

In a week's time my sister Nellie came to keep us company. Their beauty, distinction, and attire of the latest Parisian fashion, and an idiotic rumour that I had



eloped with an heiress, attracted so much attention that it became necessary for the two girls "to take their walks abroad" by night. Our only acquaintances outside the theatre were our dear friend Charles Bray and his charming family, at whose house we occasionally met the lady afterwards known to fame as George Eliot and the then famous George Dawson of Birmingham. Naturally the girls desired to see me act, and at length they put in an appearance for *The School for Scandal*. Evidently they made a sensation, for the house rose at them, the men roared, the women screamed and waved their handkerchiefs in a frenzy of delight. My poor girls were alarmed, and would have left the house if Charles Bray had not come to the rescue. All this was, however, as nothing compared to my reception. When I was discovered at the head of the table, I thought the house would have tumbled down about our ears.

At or about this time Macready had retired from the stage, and a farewell banquet was given to him. It was originally intended to take place in the Freemasons' Tavern, but the demand for tickets was so great that it was transferred to the Hall of Commerce in Threadneedle Street. There was a rush for seats, and when I applied, I was told I was too late. I then made an appeal to Charles Dickens, in whose hands the arrangements were. I reminded him of our slight acquaintance, and he wrote me a characteristically courteous autograph letter enclosing a ticket.

Still dependent upon the resources of a country actor's slender salary, the expenses of the journey had

to be looked at very carefully. The train arrived at Euston barely in time to admit of my driving direct to Threadneedle Street ; hence I had to travel in evening dress from Coventry. Wrapped in my Hamlet cloak, some furs and rugs, I made my way from Euston Square to the Hall of Commerce. When I arrived there, by some mistake on the part of the officials I was shown (cloak, rugs, and furs included), into a brilliantly lighted waiting-room nearly filled with guests. I suppose my eccentric appearance attracted attention ; everybody seemed to stare at me, and I felt somewhat embarrassed. A tall, slender, supercilious-looking, fair-haired coxcomb with Hyperion locks and faultless waxed moustache, a Roman nose, a wonderfully arranged white choker, a great shaggy "wraprascal" over his elegant evening dress, attracted my attention, and I may say excited my anger. He had posed himself with indolent grace, leaning against the mantelpiece with his legs crossed. His handsome aristocratic head rested on his left hand, while with his right he put up his eyeglass and took stock of me from head to foot, as who should say, "What wild young man of the woods have we here?"

I felt myself crimson to the ear-tips. While I was thinking I should like to punch this gentleman's head, a confused murmur of voices and a general movement announced the arrival of the guest of the evening. From the accident of my position, I happened to be the very first person with whom Mr. Macready came in contact. He shook hands, gave me a gracious welcome, and passed on to the fair-haired "swell." "Ah, my dear

Sir Edward," said he, and to my astonishment I discovered that this lordly exquisite was no less a personage than the author of *Richelieu*. My anger, however, died out in speechless admiration when, upon Mr. Macready doing me the honour to introduce me, Sir Edward murmured a few commonplace courtesies. That was a red-letter day, or rather night, to me. Apart from the occasion itself, such an assemblage of distinguished people has never been got together since. Fortunately for me, although unfortunately for himself, Alfred Wigan, who was on the committee, was taken ill and had to go home, having previously ceded me his seat between Thackeray and the Chevalier Bunsen, the Prussian ambassador, both of whom were very affable and complaisant to "the young man from the country."

Certain incidents connected with this memorable visit come back to me now as freshly as if they had taken place but yesterday. First, Fox, the Unitarian preacher, made a long-winded and grandiloquent speech, and was called to time ; next, Mr. John Forster ladled out, or, I should say, roared forth an ode written for the occasion by Tennyson, commencing, "Macready, moral, grand, sublime!" then Phelps, who was to have returned thanks for the drama, turned tail and bolted ; and Charles Kemble, whom I saw for the first and last time on that occasion, made a somewhat irrelevant speech, in the middle of which he "dried up" and sat down.

"Heavens!" thought I, "can this deaf, blatant, obtuse old gentleman with the broken nose, be all that

remains of that mirror of chivalry, the peerless Faulconbridge, the gallant Orlando, the matchless Romeo, and the magnanimous Mark Antony?"

Bulwer was the chairman, and made a speech which read famously in the papers next day, but sounded very badly that night. He was accredited with having based Sir "Fwedewick Blount" in *Money* on his own peculiarities, and I can well believe it. One of his sentences still rings in my ears. Here it is, "I think, gentlemen, you will all agwee with me that ewewy gweat actah hath hith peculiah mannah, as well as ewewy gweat witer hath hith peculiah style."

Thackeray, who had to propose "the health of the ladies," would, I thought, have broken down every moment, not from the cause assigned by some "d——d good-natured friends" (of that I can speak with positive certainty), but from sheer nervousness. There had been bitter blood between the "noble Baronet" and the author of *The Yellowplush Papers*, and it seemed to me as if the former noted the latter's discomfiture with an amused and languid disdain, which overlaid a somewhat deeper-rooted feeling.

Charles Dickens (a capital after-dinner speaker) was at his best, and ranged from grave to gay with equal facility; indeed, his speech was as florid as his costume, which was striking enough in all conscience. He wore a blue dress-coat, faced with silk and aflame with gorgeous brass buttons; a vest of black satin, with a white satin collar and a wonderfully embroidered shirt. When he got up to speak, his long curly hair, his luxuriant whiskers, his handsome face, his bright eyes,

his general aspect of geniality and *bonhomie* presented a delightful picture. I made some ingenuous remark upon the subject to Thackeray, who blandly rejoined, "Yes, the beggar is beautiful as a butterfly, especially about the shirt-front."

The speech of the night was, however, Macready's. When he arose, a thunder of acclamation broke forth that shook tables and glasses, walls and windows, till, verily, the latter seemed as if they were going to tumble about our ears. It was not alone that he was the hero of the occasion, and that all men's hearts went out to him, but chiefly because he knew how to speak. His resonant, sonorous voice rang round the place like the shrill blast of a clarion, or died away like the soft breathing of the lute; but whether diminuendo or crescendo, every word was clearly articulated, and made its mark. Now this was phenomenal, remembering his vocal eccentricities in ordinary conversation. As far as I could see through my own tears, there was scarcely a single dry eye in the vicinity. When all was over, he moved away through an avenue of overwrought men, excited and hysterical as women. They clutched his hands, or, failing that, merely touched his coat, while many, who could not get near him, cried "God bless you, sir!" or "God bless you, Mac!"

In my mind's eye I can see him now as I saw him then, yet that was the last time I ever saw in the flesh the idol of my boyish dreams. That night, at the maturity of his powers and in the zenith of his fame, he passed for ever from the fierce light of public life into

That which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.

One heard occasionally of family losses which rendered his home desolate ; of a new and noble devotion which had solaced his declining years ; of the active part he took in educating the children of his poorer neighbours ; of an ovation at the 'Varsities when he went to Oxford and Cambridge to read Shakespeare, Milton, or Pope ; of an occasional visit with Charles Dickens to the theatres. And so the years passed away till Time seemed to have forgotten that William Macready had ever been.

One night, some thirty years ago, as I was going on the stage of the York Theatre for *Charles Surface*, a telegram was handed to me from my old friend, James Chute (Macready's brother-in-law) ; it was to this effect :

"Macready is dead. The funeral takes place to-morrow at two o'clock at Kensal Green. Come."

That night I played Charles with a heavy heart. When the play was over, I took the express and came up to town, and on the morrow joined the sorrowing multitude who flocked around his grave to pay the last tribute of respect to the great tragedian's memory.

Ascending the steps, about to enter the chapel for the funeral service, I caught sight of the face of a woman on the outward fringe of the crowd, with great sorrowing eyes, gazing wistfully at me. It was my old friend Julia Saint George, who had been with me in the old time in Edinburgh, and for whose sake I had rendered myself ridiculous on Dundee Sands in the long ago.

Those beautiful eyes were as potent as ever, and drew me towards my old comrade ; so down I sprang, battled my way through the crowd, and reached her side, to find I had not only failed to secure a place for her, but had actually lost my own ! Hence we were both left in the cold until the funeral procession emerged from the chapel, and we were enabled to follow our great master to his grave and cast a wreath of laurel.

That night James Chute and I dined together at the Albion. My old friend was a good hater. Two of his especial antipathies were Edmund Yates and Barry Sullivan. Both were dining at the Albion on that occasion, and both came up to exchange some passing civility with me. As Yates lounged away, Chute emitted a swear-word or two.

“ Evidently you don't like Edmund ? ” I suggested.

“ Like ! I hate him ! ”

Then Sullivan came up to shake hands. Chute was even more ungracious, and when Barry left us, the irate impresario growled, “ Impudent duffer ! Thinks he can act ! ”

“ So he can ! ” I rejoined. “ Anyhow, John Oxenford tells me he's the best Richard since Edmund Kean.”

“ Oxenford is an idiot, and, what's more, I don't think he ever saw Edmund Kean ! 'Had he done so, he would never have dared to compare that bogtrotter with him ! And Richard too ! Richard is it ? Heavens ! it's Danny Mann, so it is—Danny Mann in a shape dhress ! ”

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### "LADY GODIVA"

In Lady Godiva I meet an Old Friend and experience a New Sensation—That Dreadful Vacation—"Cressy" to the Rescue—The Norwich Circuit—Yarmouth and Norwich—My New Manager and I agree to Differ—I tender my Resignation and seek Fresh Woods and Pastures New—"Coming Events cast their Shadows before"—After many Roving Years—The Low Comedian develops into a Transatlantic Tragedian and a Metropolitan Manager, and ultimately serves under my Banner at Drury Lane.

RECURRING to Coventry, the only event left worthy of noting in this season was that I enacted *Hamlet* and *Belphegor* for my benefit. This was the first appearance of the latter play in England. We turned as much money from the doors as got in, and actually finished the monstrosity by half-past eleven!

From Coventry we returned to Worcester—a delightful place at all times. In the summer "the faithful city" is a paradise, but unfortunately our paradise was deserted, and we but too frequently found ourselves in an Adamless Eden. I began to look out for an engagement for the ensuing season, but found I had lost caste in descending from Liverpool and Manchester, Bath and Bristol, to the Worcester circuit, and couldn't get back to the big theatres. Then again I was no longer alone—I had a wife and sister dependent on me.



The outlook was not reassuring. In this emergency came an offer for the Norwich circuit, which I accepted not without serious misgivings, for there were now three railway fares instead of one, more expensive lodgings, women's dresses, three mouths to feed, and possibly more to come!

At this time came an invitation from a friend to see the great “Lady Godiva” pageant, then about to take place. Despatching the girls direct to town, where Annie was already awaiting them, I broke the journey at Coventry. The city was crowded to overflowing by holiday-makers from all parts, and the streets were almost impassable when I joined my friend in a room at the principal hotel.

It was late, and when I took my seat at the window, the fanfare of trumpets announced the end of the pageant, which was about to terminate in the inner quadrangle of the hotel. The central *figurante* was Signora Miranda from the principal Italian theatres. All kinds of rumours were in circulation about this lady, who, it was alleged, had been paid a fabulous sum to secure her attendance, while her beauty was said to be phenomenal.

The music got louder and louder, the crowd became more and more excited, the procession drew nearer and nearer. At last! at last she came in sight! For once rumour had not exaggerated. She was clad principally in loveliness and her abundant hair, which covered her as with an iridescent mantle of brown and gold. She seemed ineffably sad and weary, as though disdainfully conscious of her own degradation. Her violet-

lidded eyes, with their long trailing lashes, were rigidly closed. But that hair! that form! My God! could it be possible?

With blood aflame, I leaped downstairs and rushed into the quadrangle. The music ceased. Her eyes opened and met mine. A shuddering horror seemed to shake her from head to foot.

"You here! You!" she gasped as she slid from the saddle and fell senseless into my arms.

Signora Miranda was Norah! Yes, Norah Kavanagh!

It was the year of the Great Exhibition. My sisters were in town. I had to take them and my darling everywhere, more especially to that wonder of the world—the Exhibition itself. In those days there were no suburban or underground railways, no tubes, no tramcars, no electric conveyances, no penny 'buses. One couldn't go from Oxford Circus to Piccadilly, or from the latter to Charing Cross, or from thence to Ludgate Circus for less than sixpence.

Breakers were ahead. There was still a month's vacation to be got over before we opened in Yarmouth, and I began to realise the imprudence of an early marriage without a banking account. Had I been alone it wouldn't have mattered. Accustomed to rough it, I could have kept a stiff upper lip upon an empty stomach; but "she" had been tenderly nurtured and had delicate health. She had, however, entered into the compact with her eyes open and with perfect knowledge of my precarious income, and was the most loyal and devoted of helpmates.

My slender resources were drawing to an end, when I happened to meet Creswick, with whom I had acted in Liverpool during Fanny Kemble's engagement. He had just then entered into partnership with Shepherd at the Surrey, and was about to produce *Brutus*; or, *The Fall of Tarquin*, but he was “stuck” for a Titus and wanted me for his son. Now Brutus was one of my pet parts—in fact, I had the Roman drama on the brain; but “Cressy” offered me ten pounds for the week—a large salary in those days, especially for a minor theatre. I looked at my empty purse and thought of the month to be got over. Of course, I had contemplated nothing less than Drury Lane. Elliston had, however, been manager of the Surrey, and Macready had recently acted there. “Ten pounds are ten pounds!” So I took the bait. When our rehearsals commenced, “Cressy” suggested that I was too tall, and I must keep well down the stage. This involved a new pair of sandals; the sandals involved a guinea. Still, one must be thankful for small mercies, and Titus enabled us to tide over that horrid vacation.

“Cressy” and his partner, the redoubtable “Dick,” proposed an engagement for the ensuing season, but as I had already entered into a contract for the Norwich Circuit, I could not entertain the proposal.

This circuit had formerly comprised Norwich, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Cambridge, Colchester, Lynn, and Bury St. Edmunds. On the retirement of the Smith family, under whose direction the theatres for many years had been conducted with varying vicissitudes of fortune, they fell into the hands of Mr. Davenport, an actor of large

experience and, it was alleged, of considerable ability, who had been in management in America, in London (at the Olympic), and at Portsmouth.

When I joined the Norwich section of the circuit at Yarmouth, it was under the direction of Mr. Joseph Clarence, who had formerly been Mr. Davenport's low comedian and who now aspired to be a tragedian. It was the fashion for years to ridicule Clarence's pretensions, but the fact remains that the audience, which for years had accepted him as "Demosthenes Dodge" and "Leary Cum Fitz," and even as "Clown" (and a very good clown too!) in the pantomime, accepted him as a tragic hero! Nay, more, as Mr. Clarence Holt, he attained celebrity as a tragedian at the Antipodes, and was not only tolerated as Iago and Othello with G. V. Brooke and Barry Sullivan, but actually made money by the experiment, returned to England, became a metropolitan manager, and was received as a "star" in the principal provincial theatres. When we first met, he was a rough (very rough) diamond with a copious and florid cockney vocabulary, and, I may as well frankly admit, I myself was a pedantic, pretentious young prig.

He had graduated in the "minors," and our methods and manners assimilated about as well as oil with vinegar; hence we differed upon every conceivable subject, but more especially on the subject of acting. One would have thought my popularity and attraction (which I may recall now without vanity) would have induced him to endure our differences with equanimity, but they really served only to accentuate them.

One of my pet weaknesses was the part of Evelyn in *Money*, of which I had made an elaborate study. Although it "caught on" and became highly attractive, it was Clarence's *bête noir*, and he regarded it with unconcealed aversion. Many amusing stories were told of his lack of appreciation of my efforts in this particular play. Upon one occasion when I inquired of Graves in my usual colloquial manner, "Do you know what a sizar is?" honest Joe, who was chafing at the prompt entrance, burst forth flaming to Mr. Marcus Elmore, who happened to be standing next him, "There—there! d'ye hear the supercilious pup? He says, 'Do you know what a sizar is?' just as if he was saying, 'Good-mornin'!' Ah! if *I* had to say it, I should jump up and let him have it straight in the eye, let him have it with life and fire and animation. 'Do *you* know what a sizar is? Do *you*, Elmore? 'Cos I'm darned if *I* do!'"

A rupture was bound to come sooner or later, and it came through *Julius Cæsar*, which Clarence insisted on doing in opposition to my advice. It was in vain I represented there was no Mark Antony in the company. He retorted by casting the part to a second low comedian. When I urged there was only one toga in the troupe and that was my personal property, he replied, "There are bushels of sheets to be had!"

When I reminded him that there were no Roman swords, helmets, breastplates, or lamberkins, he retorted, "There are a dozen dragoon helmets, and more than a dozen combat broadswords."

As he persisted in doing the piece, I tendered my

resignation, the only occasion on which I ever had occasion to do so.

According to the tenor of my engagement, I was entitled to a benefit.

Although it was only a week before Christmas (the worst time in the year) *The Lady of Lyons*, Collins' *Ode to the Passions* (which I recited to a musical accompaniment, illustrated by a series of *tableaux vivants* invented for the occasion), *Black-eyed Susan*, and my personal prestige sufficed to crowd the theatre to overflowing with a more than usually enthusiastic audience, and I cleared some £25 or £30 by the performance.

The news of my secession had reached Mr. Hooper, the manager of the other section of the circuit, who made me a proposal to join him at Ipswich on Boxing Night at an increased salary. The engagement was settled there and then, and when I called to remove my impedimenta from the theatre, Clarence (who had evidently thought better of it) begged me to remain—even offered me an increased salary and another benefit (this time a clear half of the receipts); but my word being pledged to Hooper, I was bound to fulfil my contract, and so I bade farewell to Norwich.

Many years elapsed before I met my old manager again. During the interval he had developed into Clarence "Holt," and had been to America and Australia, while I had become proprietor of the Great Northern circuit and of the new Queen's, Long Acre. We were both older and wiser, and had become more tolerant of each other's infirmities. For a considerable period Holt was prosperous; then came one of those periods of

adversity to which all managers are subject, and I succeeded in inducing Augustus Harris to engage Holt to manage the Glasgow theatre for him. The result was unfortunate, and threatened to end in a law-suit, had I not been called upon to arbitrate, which I did to the satisfaction of both parties. When I myself became manager of Drury Lane, one of my first engagements was Clarence Holt, who subsequently managed a company for me in the provinces.

While this narrative was in preparation, my old manager was stricken down with paralysis, during which I frequently visited him. On these occasions he loved to “act his young encounters o’er again.”

At our very last interview, while dilating on the Dickensonian legend of “The Juvenile Phenomenon,” the veteran assured me that, while yet a girl of eighteen, Miss Davenport was not only an admirable Juliet, Ophelia, Lady Teazle, Letitia Hardy, and Pauline Deschappelles, but an accomplished vocalist accustomed to disport herself to the satisfaction of the public as the heroines of *La Sonnambula*, *The Crown Diamonds*, and *The Bohemian Girl*!

Blissfully unconscious of imminent danger, I left my old friend elate and confident of immediate recovery—and now! While these lines are actually being written comes the news that he has “reached the end of his journey,” and by a remarkable coincidence I also learn, by cable from New York, that “The Juvenile Phenomenon” has herself ceased to exist except in the pages of *Nicholas Nickleby*!

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENTS*

Ipswich—*The Mistletoe Bough* and *Othello*—Lynn—*Monte Cristo*—*Hop o' My Thumb*—Mrs. Nye Chart's *protégé*—J. L. Toole—Hull and Leeds—Harry Beverley and the Queen's Theatre—A good Investment—Cambridge—Charles Coghlan—Bury St. Edmunds—Isabella Glyn.

ON arriving at Ipswich, I found Mr. Hooper conspicuous by his absence. His place was filled by his treasurer, who, in giving me a cordial welcome, intimated that my worthy manager was detained by a law-suit, and that I must not anticipate the pleasure of his company until we got to the next town—Lynn.

Ultimately it leaked out that whenever a period of debt or difficulty occurred—an event of by no means unusual occurrence—through the sympathetic offices of a friendly creditor, Hooper was wont to retire to that happy hunting-ground in the early sixties for impecunious gentlemen (*au fait* in legal dodges) the blest retreats of Whitecross Street. On these festive occasions, in order to obviate inconvenience, Mrs. Hooper—a charming old lady—was always provided with a receipt in full for debt and costs and an order for immediate discharge, both of which were presented at



an opportune moment, when the dear old boy emerged radiant and triumphant, thoroughly whitewashed and prepared to make a fresh start.

His *locum tenens* at Ipswich was an amiable little man without the faintest idea of even the rudimental principles of management. In all my experience I have never met, scarcely ever even heard of, anything to compare with the crass mismanagement of this season. We opened on Boxing Night to a crowded house with a little drama called *The Mistletoe Bough*, supposed to be in "Two Acts." Having, however, neither master-carpenter, scene-shifters, nor property-man, we contrived to make eleven acts of it! I thought that first night would have been our last, and as my two sisters, my younger brother, and my wife's sister had come to pass Christmas with us, 'twas a lively look-out for the holidays.

Our second performance was *Othello*, which threatened to come to an abrupt and novel termination in consequence of the eccentricity of the lady who went on for Emilia. Although a fine strapping creature, she had a voice like a penny whistle, and she made such a lamb-like idiot of Emilia that every line she uttered evoked a guffaw. The remembrance of my small triumph when I was permitted to attempt Othello to the greatest Iago of the age, added to my mortification in being associated with this degrading burlesque, angered me to such an extent that when I rushed at the lady with a drawn scimitar in the last scene, she was so alarmed that she turned and bolted off the stage amidst uncontrollable yells of laughter.

It was in vain the stage manager urged her to return and finish her part. "What!" she gasped, "go on again to that maniac with a drawn sabre in his hand! No, thank you!" She couldn't be induced to return, and we had to finish the play as well as we could without her. That was poor Emilia's first and last appearance in Ipswich.

Although half the members of the company knew their business, the other half didn't, and it was quite evident, if we attempted the standard works, we should be exposed to injurious comparisons. In this emergency the experience of our stage manager, Mr. Mills, tided us over a difficulty. He fished out a number of minor theatre dramas, with which he and the leader of the orchestra were familiar. "Cut the cackle" and "Come to the situations" were his mottoes. The words were quite a secondary consideration, and as our programme was changed nightly, it was obviously impossible to learn them, besides which, they were so bald and commonplace that in the majority of instances our nightly improvised dialogue was an improvement on the text. Fortunately the audience didn't find us out; hence these wretched performances not only passed current, but we really had a paying season! My wife and sisters, however, were shocked at these ignominious exhibitions, and I was heartily ashamed of my participation therein.

From Ipswich we went to Lynn, where Mr. Hooper (having emerged from Whitecross Street) awaited our arrival. A very genial old gentleman he was, the very image of Turveydrop; indeed, I could associate him with no one else, although he had actually been manager

of the Great Northern Circuit, the Theatre Royal, Bath, the New St. James's with Braham, and the Olympic with Nesbit, where he first brought out Charles Mathews.

The Lynn theatre—a charming little place—is the property of the corporation. Here “a change came o’er the spirit of our dream.” The company was reinforced and improved, and we did the standard works with propriety and in some instances admirably.

For my benefit I did my new play of *Monte Cristo*, founded on glorious old Alexandre’s great work and turned money from the doors.

At the end of the season we were invited to return to Ipswich. We had left behind us some very hospitable friends, notably a dear, kind-hearted, play-going parson, a painter who was also a pawnbroker (the very prince of pawnbrokers!), and a handsome, stalwart dancing-master of six feet, whose father had been a player and a Unitarian preacher to boot! These charming fellows and their still more charming women-kind tempted us back.

The dancing-master had for assistant a youthful cadet of a famous musical family, who became stage-struck, and when I went into management soon afterwards, induced me to bring him out. Now, mark “what great events from trifling causes spring!” Five-and-twenty years ago, having to produce the pantomime of *Hop o’ my Thumb* at Leeds, I required a clever boy for the hero. Mrs. Nye Chart recommended a boy who had distinguished himself highly in the part at Brighton, and sent the little fellow to me, accompanied

by another brother, also a child, but still old enough to safeguard his junior. I knew nothing about the bairns save that they were protégés of my dear old friend Mrs. Chart, and my astonishment may therefore be imagined when, at the last rehearsal, a haggard, way-worn man staggered on the stage and descending on the children in a fit of hysteria, claimed them for his own. Still greater was my amazement when I recognised in this "prodigal parent" my protégé, the dancing master's assistant from Ipswich!

At the end of the season he disappeared with the boys, and I lost sight of them altogether for years, until the other day, when my little "Hop o' my Thumb" turned up as a prosperous West End manager!

I'm ashamed to say that during our second visit to Ipswich we went through more ignoble and degrading experiences than even on the former occasion. To make matters worse, "the ghost did not walk," and, insubordination and rebellion having become rampant, I sent in my resignation. The women of the company having, however, appealed to me not to desert them in their extremity, I consented to stay till the end of the season, when I took my Benefit, presenting *Monte Cristo* and *Sylvester Daggerwood*, to enable an aspiring amateur, who came to me with an introduction to make his first appearance on the stage. The absurdity of my namesake George Colman's old-fashioned farce was condoned by the eccentricities of the *débutant*, who even then afforded abundant promise of the humour which reached its maturity when the amateur J. W. Lawrence had developed into the actor J. L. Toole.

No reference to this distinguished "droll" is complete without an anecdote. Here is one incidental to this occasion. Having given various imitations of more or less distinguished actors, my facetious friend proceeded to accentuate the occasion by giving one of me. Having finished in silence, he said, "That's Coleman!" Where-upon a wag in the stage-box replied with great solemnity, "Thanks! Obligated for the information!" When "Johnnie cracks this wheeze," he is wont to say, "That was a useful object lesson at the beginning of my career. From that time forth I have always announced the name of the person I am imitating *before*, instead of *after*, the imitation. The chaps in front are so stupid, and it is awkward for 'Bucky' to be taken for Charles Kean, or me for Macready!"

At the end of the Ipswich season I had an invitation from De Ville (who, it will be remembered, was our chorus master in Glasgow) to join him at Hull, where he had become sub-lessee, *vice* Harry Beverley, the younger of the Roxby Beverleys, who had retired to York in safe keeping for debt. Upon arriving in Hull, I found myself in the heart of the dog-days and a general election! Although the company comprised Fred Robinson, Bruce Norton, Tom Holmes, Wybert Rousby, Reynolds, Artaud, and Lewis Ball, the Paynes, Miss Fanny Bennet, Mrs. Dyas, Miss Aldridge, Miss Armour, the beautiful D'Antonie, the accomplished ballerina who afterwards became Mrs. Jaffrey of Birmingham, we couldn't draw half our current expenses. Salaries were irregular—in point of fact, I

never received a single week's salary save once, and that was under such exceptional circumstances that I will relate them.

Leeds Fair was about to take place, and De Ville had secured the theatre there, intending to do light pieces and ballets with the Paynes and D'Antonie. Under these circumstances Fred Robinson was required for the Charles Mathews parts, and, knowing that he was indispensable, demanded his arrears of salary before he stirred hand or foot. It was impossible for the wretched De Ville to comply with this request; hence, in the emergency, he applied to me by wire to come to the rescue, offering to guarantee me £30 of my arrears out of the week's receipts. In reply I took the next train. On my arrival at Leeds, I was met at the station by the entire troupe, who rushed at me and hugged me. I couldn't make out what all this fuss meant, but it was easily explained. Without me they couldn't have opened that night, and my presence raised them from the depths of despair.

After this demonstration, De Ville took me to the "Three Legs of Man," where a repast (repast, did I say?—a banquet) consisting of salmon and cucumber, a loin of lamb and green peas, an apricot tart, and a bottle of the glorious vintage of champagne, awaited me. That night I enacted the Marquis de Frontignac and Sir Charles Coldstream without a rehearsal. The theatre was crowded nightly; De Ville was as good as his word, paid me my £30, and I returned to Hull on Saturday in time to play *Richard* that night, also without a rehearsal.

Harry Beverley had just emerged from York Castle. He had heard of my windfall at Leeds, and made a descent on me after the play.

"Lend me a fiver," said he.

"What for?"

"To take the Queen's Theatre."

"With five pounds?"

"Yes. Stump up, and I'll give you a fortnight's starring engagement."

I gave him the "fiver." He went by the next train to Sheffield, saw the manager of the insurance company who held a mortgage on the theatre, secured it, came back lessee, gave me an engagement, made a "star" of me, and with the aid of *The Man in the Iron Mask* cleared over £60 in the fortnight, so that after all that £5 was not a bad investment.

My next move was to charming old Cambridge, endeared to me by many tender and delightful associations. On our arrival we overhauled some rooms in Jesus Lane for lodgings. The custodian demanded five guineas a week, which was more than my actual salary. I replied by inquiring sarcastically if that included stabling, as I should require accommodation for my horses.

"No, sir," replied the landlady, "but Death & Dyson opposite will see to them for you."

"I daresay they will," I retorted, "when I ask 'em."

I had scarcely left the house two minutes, when a fellow came pelting, helter-skelter, after us.

"Beg pardon," said he, "but are you the lady and gentleman who inquired for lodgings at No. 23 just now?"

"Yes," I replied. "What then?"

"Well, sir, my wife has (no offence, I hope?) taken a fancy to you and your good lady, and as the long vacation is on and we are empty, what's the outside you can spring for the rooms?"

"A guinea and no extras."

"A bargain! Say no more, sir. I'll be off to the station and bring your traps home."

Had I been a prince of the blood, we couldn't have been better treated than we were by those honest people. My worthy landlord was a "gyp" at the college, of which his son, "little Billie," is now a Fellow. Dear "little Billie" with the red hair was as proud as Punch to be my darling's cavalier, and to escort her to and from the theatre and sit beside her every night in the boxes. In mathematics and classics he can wipe the floor with me, and I believe the solid earth trembles now when he walks across the quadrangle; but to me he is still now and always "Dear little Billie."

We had an excellent company, some charming girls and nice boys. Two or three new pieces—notably *The Corsican Brothers*, *Belphegor*, *Ingomar*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—proved highly attractive.

Charles Coghlan joined us at this time, and made his first appearance as Tybalt. I never killed a man with more pleasure than I killed poor Charlie. He was such a howling duffer then that I thought he would never have made an actor; but I was the first to acknowledge my mistake when, a few years later, I encountered him at Swansea, where I went to fulfil an engagement with Belton. On this occasion Coghlan



played Captain Hawksley (*Still Waters*), Don Cæsar (*Ruy Blas*), and Laertes in a most promising manner. He had very ingratiating manners, and I recommended him strongly to Horace Wigan, who thereupon engaged him for the Olympic.

Prior, however, to his going there, we had a serious brush in Hull, in consequence of his making a "dead stick" in the last scene of one of my plays.

The manager came round to demand the cause, alleging that it was an insult to me and a scandal to the theatre. Although I was the principal sufferer, both as actor and author, knowing that the occurrence was purely accidental, I sought to throw oil on the troubled waters. The manager, however, was obdurate. The fact was, a lady was connected with the scene whom he wanted to get rid of, and he attributed the "stick" to her. Although a scion of a distinguished theatrical family, she was unfortunately the plainest creature ever seen. The poor soul looked at me appealingly; I looked appealingly at Coghlan; he made no sign in response. The manager proceeded to dismiss the poor lady there and then; this was more than I could stand.

"Mr. Coghlan," said I, "have you nothing to say to this?"

"N—no!" he replied.

"But *I* have. You know quite well, sir, that the 'stick' was yours, not Miss W——'s! These are the words you omitted," and I quoted them.

The lady was not dismissed, but Coghlan was sent to "Coventry" by the company.

After this we occasionally met in town, and looked each other in the eyes, but passed on in silence. Time came and went. For some cause or other he had to leave the Olympic, and for a considerable period was "resting" because he could get nothing to do. To my surprise he wrote me a most touching letter, referring to the unfortunate incident at Hull, and expressing his regret in the most manly terms. He had been staying for some time with his friend Lord S—— in Scotland, and, being afraid he might outstay his welcome, besought me to give him an engagement for himself and wife. I did so in Hull, the very place where the misunderstanding had taken place, and never found two more loyal and devoted supporters.

At the end of this engagement I sent Coghlan to Fred Younge to play Hawtree in *Caste* during its first provincial tour; this led to his engagement with the Bancrofts and to his subsequent London engagements; and now—— Ah well,

Golden lads and lasses must,  
Like chimney sweepers, come to dust!

and yonder he lies in his sarcophagus, 'neath the unfathomed depths of ocean, while I, who saw the poor lad make his first appearance, have survived to tell the story of his last.

From Cambridge we went to Bury St. Edmunds, where I became acquainted with Mr. Bodham Donne, the licenser of plays. We had a charming time at Bury, seeing old family pictures and historic mansions, from the Marquis of Exeter's place downwards.

My next engagement was at Newcastle-on-Tyne. I finished at Bury with my benefit on Friday, and was due on the following Monday to open at Newcastle in *Macbeth*. My friends in Bury gave a little supper and a dance in honour of the occasion.

There was no railway then to Thetford ; hence we had to hire a chaise and pair to catch the train to Ely and Peterborough. Now at that time there was only *one* train from Thetford during the day. Our coachey had been up all night in connection with the dance, and had had more drink than was good for him. He assured us, however, that he would be in time to catch the train at Thetford. He was in time to enable us to catch a glimpse of it as it steamed off, and to be left stranded there for the whole of Saturday. The Sunday trains were simply awful. We were stuck at Ely, and stuck again at Peterborough ever so long. To this day I fail to realise how we bungled the business. I only know that it was owing to the courtesy of the Peterborough station-master we were enabled to reach York in a horse-box attached to a goods train.

From York I wired Davis that I had missed the train, but that he might rely (accidents excepted) on my arrival at two o'clock on Monday. I did arrive punctually to the hour. Isabella Glyn had arrived an hour before from Liverpool. We played *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* without a rehearsal, and had actually never met till she hailed me as, "Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!" Greater than both by the "all hail" hereafter!

In the embrace she artfully swung me round, placing

the full front of my back to the audience. By a dexterous *coup-de-main* I reversed the position, to the manifest chagrin of "my dearest partner of greatness," who—— But *Isabelle la grande* demands a new chapter.

## CHAPTER XXX

### LA GRANDE ISABELLE

Charles Kemble and his *Protégée*—Her *Début* in Manchester and at “The Wells”—Isabella and I agree to differ—The Last Act of *The Duchess of Malfy*—The Star “dries up” in the Text of *The Fatal Marriage*, and has to apologise—Nevertheless, she strikes Fire *when the Time is Ripe*—Antony and Cleopatra at Daggers drawn—*Nitocris*—A Row in the Lobby at Drury Lane—“Two Lovely Black Eyes”—Rhadamanthus at Bow Street—Charles Surface with a Black Eye—Older and wiser grown—Isabella and I make Friends—She marries and prepares Pupils—Sweet Dorothy—Preceptress and Pupil “slip like Shadows into Shade!”—Back to Yorkshire—John Mosley and Huddersfield—First Production on the English Stage of Schiller’s *Robbers*—I am invited to Sheffield, and open there as Julian St. Pierre—Charles Dillon and his *Monte Cristo*—A Burst-Up and a Bad Look-Out.

ISABELLA GLYN, a Scotswoman of “mature years and majestic proportions,” was a *protégée* of Charles Kemble, who taught her the Siddonian traditions of Lady Macbeth, Hermione, Queen Katherine, Isabella (*The Fatal Marriage*), and Constance (*King John*), in which latter character he (Kemble) induced Mr. “Man-be-Done” of Manchester to permit her to make her first appearance on the stage in that city. On the strength of a very dubious success achieved there, Kemble persuaded Phelps to accept Isabella at “The Wells,” where he (Phelps) taught her the Queen (*Hamlet*), Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*), and The Duchess (*The*

*Duchess of Malfy*). This gruesome play (revived for the first time for three hundred years) attracted considerable attention, with the result that the Duchess gave herself airs, and had a violent attack of "swelled head." A little of this went a long way with Phelps, and resulted in the abrupt dismissal of the lady.

The name of Sadler's Wells was, however, a passport to many important theatres; hence the advent of Kemble's pupil at Newcastle. My simultaneous appearance was unfortunate both for her and myself. In addition to *Macbeth*, the plays selected were *The Duchess of Malfy*, *Fazio*, *A Winter's Tale*, *The Fatal Marriage*, *Henry VIII.*, *School for Scandal*, and *The Hunchback*, in which I was cast for the Duke Ferdinand, Leontes, Biron, Wolsey, Joseph Surface (a part I never could abide and never could play), and that platitudinal appraiser of pictures, Master Walter. I had never played any of these parts, and except *Macbeth* and *The Fatal Marriage*, they were all utterly unsuited to my immaturity. In the first five plays my heroine might have posed for a fond mother instead of a faithful wife. Wolsey was quite beyond my reach, and the quintessence of absurdity was attained when, with the aid of a grey wig and a hump, I posed as a patriarchal papa.

Accurately parroted in the archaistic method of Mrs. Siddons, many of Isabella's performances were intelligent, picturesque, and even striking. I have not seen a better Lady Macbeth, nor so good a Cleopatra or Hermione. On the other hand, I have never seen so bad a Lady Teazle or so grotesque a kitchen wench as her Julia.



ISABELLE GLYN AS LADY MACBETH.





The old system had the defects of its qualities, but it had wonderful elements of strength and vitality. Imagine the text of a great work like *Macbeth*—music, costumes, scenery, properties, all the machinery of the theatre, behind, before, and on every hand, harmoniously combined without the aid of the hero and the heroine, who actually walked on the stage without a rehearsal! Yet the play was produced without one single hitch from the rise to the fall of the curtain. The only thing I attempted in the shape of a rehearsal was the death combat, which I tried with Macduff twice—once before the play began, and a second time between the fourth and fifth acts. Fortunately we were both accomplished swordsmen, and the fight went like wild-fire—in fact, evoking a perfect furore.

When we did come to rehearsals, unfortunately Isabella and I agreed to differ upon nearly every subject. She laid down the law in the most dogmatic fashion, alleging that “Mr. Kemble *said this*,” “Mrs. Siddons *did that*,” and that whatever he said or she *did* must be right.

Our second play was *The Duchess of Malfy*. The heroine dies in Act IV.; hence it was arranged with the stage manager to rehearse the fifth act first, at ten o'clock, thus giving Isabella an additional act during which to rest and recuperate by eleven o'clock. This play, which no one in the company, save the heroine, had ever met before and no one was ever likely to meet again, was actually done with one solitary rehearsal! The last act was my only chance of distinction; hence, despite the fatigues of the past three days, with the aid of hot coffee and cold water bandages to my head, I sat

up after *Macbeth* till four o'clock in the morning polishing up the Duke, until I got inside the skin of the regal ruffian. At the ten o'clock rehearsal the stage manager gave me a free hand. Every one was letter perfect, and we felt assured of success.

At eleven o'clock Isabella put in an appearance, and we commenced the first act. It may readily be imagined the "confusion worse confounded" which is bound to ensue when an amateur takes the helm in the direction of an obsolete play. At length, however, we reached the Duchess's Death-Scene, when Isabella blandly informed us that the play terminated there, and that the fifth act would be omitted. When I ventured to intimate that I intended to do the fifth act, I was assailed with a volley of feminine vituperation. The manager was sent for. Without waiting to hear me, he decided that the act should be deleted. The injustice and the personal indignity angered me, and before the whole company I intimated that, if the fifth act was omitted, I should not act at all! This was a poser, and to the intense mortification of Isabella I carried my point, and at night the last act proved the hit of the play!

Next day my lady turned up in a violent temper for the rehearsal of *The Fatal Marriage*. To my astonishment she was imperfect in the text, and in our very first scene produced a book, and not only proceeded to read her own part, but to prompt me in mine! The manager, who was again appealed to, not only pronounced against her on this occasion, but, a change of programme being inevitable, he exacted an apology to the company before he consented to substitute

*Macbeth* for *The Fatal Marriage*. Two or three nights afterwards the latter play was produced, and justice constrains me to say that Isabella acquitted herself more than admirably. Indeed, one stroke of Siddonian "business" in the scene where I (Biron) was murdered and my wife is dragged off shrieking and madly clinging to her murdered lover, was the most thrilling *tour de force* I have ever witnessed in a theatre.

*Antony and Cleopatra* was got up on a scale of great splendour; but as Cleopatra insisted on doing it as it had been done with Phelps at the Wells, while Antony persisted in doing it his own way, the production accentuated our differences. It must be admitted that I had a hot temper, but at that time hers was so arrogant and overbearing as to be absolutely unendurable, and every one was glad when her engagement terminated. We departed at daggers drawn; yet observe how time, the greater healer, mollifies everything! Long years after, when our positions were reversed, having been tried by adversity, she had become *bonne camarade* and a kind, charming, motherly woman, though still with a pronounced dash of eccentricity, which ultimately closed the doors of the theatre against her. Her last engagement was at Drury Lane, where she enacted the heroine in a drama of Fitzball's entitled *Nitocris*.

The author of *Jonathan Bradford*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Pilot*, and a hundred other blood-and-thunder pieces was one of the meekest, mildest, most venerable old gentlemen I have ever met. When *Nitocris* was produced, Charles Mathews was stage manager at the

"Lane." The scenic arrangements were extensive and expensive. Charles told me that poor Fitz daily pleaded for the preservation of his sensational effects.

"I want an inundation at the end of the first act, sir," quoth he.

"Cut it out and transpose it to the last act," replied Charlie.

"I want a bridal procession and an epithalamium at the end of the third act, Mr. Mathews."

"Cut it out, sir!"

"But the act can't be done without it."

"Very well, then, do without the act!"

"Without the act, sir! My best act?"

"Yes! cut it, sir, cut it!"

"Cut it!"

"Yes, cut, and don't come again! Good morning, Fitz, good morning!"

There wasn't much left of *Nitocris* when I saw it, or, to be precise, I didn't see much of *Nitocris*.

Seaman, the solicitor (Mrs. Chippendale's father), and Burt, his managing clerk, had been dining with me at Simpson's when we adjourned to Drury Lane, then under the management of the renowned E. T. Smith. There were no stalls in those days, the dress circle was full, and the only seats to be had were situate at the back of the circle. I secured three for myself and friends. Having left my opera glasses at home, I dispatched the box-keeper to procure a pair, and "thereby hangs a tale." That box-keeper was Frederick B. Chatterton, destined hereafter to become manager of that very theatre, and of the Princess's and the Adelphi.

He had barely left us, when three or four fast young men, full of "dinner and distempering draughts," arrived, alleging that we had taken their seats, and demanding that we should instantly vacate them. On our demurring, an attempt was made to eject us *vi et armis*, and a free fight ensued, in which I got a most beautiful black eye. I was due the next night in Sheffield for Charles Surface! The idea of Charles with a black eye set my blood on fire, and I gave my adversary *two* black eyes in return for my one. The police now intervened; our assailants were charged and taken to Bow Street, where we left them under duress, while I obtained a piece of beef-steak at the Albion to poultice my eye with, and went back to witness the last instalment of *Nitocris*. After the play we returned to sup at the Albion, where, to our astonishment and annoyance, we found our opponents (whom we had left under lock and key at Bow Street) making merry over devilled bones and a magnum of champagne! My especial adversary did not accept his black eyes with equanimity, but suggested that we should adjourn to the cab-stand opposite the vestibule and settle our little differences. Had it not been for Seaman, I verily believe I should have been indiscreet enough to have accepted the invitation.

On the morrow our friends were fined forty shillings each and costs, so they had occasion to remember *Nitocris*. As for me I took the express to Sheffield, had my eye carefully painted, and was "all there" for Charles Surface that night. Next day I saw myself described in *The Times* police report as "A supercilious, military-looking young gentleman with an angry look and a pronounced *black eye*!"

Since that memorable night I have seen another and a better *Nitocris* at Old Drury, written by my accomplished friend Miss Clo. Graves and very well written too.

To return, however, to my friend Isabella. In the course of time she married Mr. Dallas, a journalist connected with *The Times*, and ultimately devoted herself to preparing young ladies for the stage and imparting Siddonian traditions to them. Her favourite pupil was the charming Dorothy Dene, who played her last engagement with me. Both preceptress and pupil have passed from pain to peace. When last I saw Dorothy, she was reclining, like one of Chantrey's deified figures, on a monument. I had barely time to bid her farewell when the poor dear sank into her last sleep.

Poor Dorothy ! her life was a romance—but as a certain distinguished author sagaciously observes, "That is another story."

At the end of the Newcastle season Mr. John Mosley (manager of the Bradford Theatre) invited me to join him ! at Huddersfield, where an incident occurred which changed the current of my life. The first play I ever remember to have read was Schiller's *Robbers*, and I had "longed long" to distinguish myself as the hero ; hence I had devoted my leisure for years to making an adaptation, which at length I succeeded in producing at Huddersfield. At the end of the play a note was brought round to me from the front, requesting me to meet the manager of the Sheffield Adelphi at an adjacent hotel. This gentleman, who had come over for the express purpose of seeing me act, invited me to join his

forces, offered me double the salary I was then receiving, and promised to "star" me on the bills. The temptation was irresistible, and I opened at Sheffield as Julian St. Pierre in *The Wife*.

Charles Dillon, the idol of the Sheffield "Grinders," was arrayed against me at the other house. Nature had been niggard of her gifts to this admirable actor ; yet, despite his plebeian appearance, his rugged and almost repulsive countenance, his art was so perfect, his passion so electrifying, his pathos so convincing, that he triumphed over every obstacle, and stirred his audience to enthusiasm or melted them to tears. Indeed, he only lacked that *souçon* of distinction inseparable from good breeding to have made him beyond compare the greatest actor of his epoch. He did most things in the way of acting better than most of his compeers, and, indeed, could do nothing badly. One thing, however, he could not do—he could not refrain from making himself *too* cheap. It was his third engagement that season. On the first occasion he had turned money from the doors ; on the second there had been a slight falling off ; on the third he had outstayed his welcome : hence came my opportunity.

In those days the failure or success of a season in a country town was determined the first night. If the company made a favourable impression, success was assured ; if otherwise, failure was inevitable. The failure at the commencement of the Adelphi season had been pronounced, and was accentuated by the triumph of Dillon at the "other place." The "ghost did not walk" regularly at our house ; hence the company was disaffected and disorganised.

At all times *The Wife* is a difficult play to do. Apart from the great demands made upon the heroine, there are three leading men, St. Pierre, Ferrado, and Leonardo Gonzaga. Mr. Henry Sinclair (long after an important member of the Drury Lane Company) was cast Leonardo, was afraid of the part, and threw it up at the last moment. Mr. John Johnson, the scene-painter of the company and brother of Mr. Sam Johnson (so long at the Lyceum), volunteered to fill the gap, and actually did so at a moment's notice.

I digress here to relate a singular coincidence respecting this play. Two years later Mr. Charles Diddear (Miss Helen Faucit's uncle), one of the original actors in this play, was cast for Ferrado Gonzaga with me in the very same town. Having never acted the part, the old actor worked himself into a fever of stage fright, took to his bed after the last rehearsal, and left us without a substitute. In this emergency my excellent good friend Sam Johnson, the principal comedian of the company, stepped into Diddear's shoes, took the part without apology or explanation or even an attempt at rehearsal, and actually acquitted himself most creditably.

To return, however, to my *débüt*. We had a crowded house, but an arctic audience. In the fourth act, however, there was a thaw, which burst into a flood, and carried everything before it in an outburst of genuine enthusiasm. The following night, after *Othello*, Richard Younge came to me and invited me to accompany him to the Theatre Royal.

"What! at this hour?" I inquired.



"Ah! I see you don't know Dillon. Look at the programme," replied Younge.

I did look at it. It was Dillon's benefit, and consisted of a play called *The Cavalier*, the drama of *The Violet, or Napoleon's Flower*, and *Monte Cristo*!

"But I have to get this beastly black stuff off my face!" I objected.

"Oh, that doesn't matter! There's plenty of time yet!" responded Younge.

It was well-nigh twelve o'clock when we reached the Theatre Royal, where we found Edmond Dantes had not yet escaped from the Château D'If, and it was actually half-past one before the curtain finally fell!

It was through experiments of this kind that Dillon ultimately imperilled his great popularity.

At the end of my second week my new manager was *non est*, so was the treasury, and the theatre closed at a moment's notice, throwing every one out of employment and most of us out of bread; so that, except for the barren honour of being "starred" on the bills, I had better have remained in Huddersfield.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### *FIRST PLUNGE INTO MANAGEMENT*

The Stranded Comedians—"Owd Tommy"—*Le Fils du Diable*—Another Vacation—My Second "Starring" Engagement at Buxton—My Third at Stockport—The Long Strike—A Levanting Lessee—Willy Nilly I am made Manager—We adjourn to Oldham—*The Will and the Way* leads the Way to the Management of the Sheffield Theatre.

TWO entire companies were now stranded in Sheffield, and nothing was doing or likely to be done for the next two months.

The music-hall cult was then developing in town, and of course the country followed suit. An astute Tyke of the "Grinder" fraternity, popularly known to his compatriots as "Owd Tommy Youdan," had gone into this business at Sheffield, and made money by it. Noting the plethora of "lakers," as he elegantly termed them, and being under the impression that he could have his pick and choice of the best, he decided upon converting his music hall into a minor theatre. He had counted upon me for his leading man, but we couldn't come to terms ; consequently I was left in the cold, or rather in the heat, for the weather was sweltering.

I beguiled the time with Paul Feval's lurid romance *Le Fils du Diable*, and set to work, with the aid of my wife and a dictionary, to dramatise it. I might have spared myself the trouble, inasmuch as during a

subsequent visit to Paris I found it had been already dramatised for the Porte St. Marten, where, indeed, I saw it admirably done.

I wrote here, there, everywhere for an engagement, but in vain. It was evident that nothing would be doing till September, save in the watering-places, and they were all "full up." Over and over again I wished myself back with Clarence and the herrings at Yarmouth. How were we to exist till September? That was the question I asked myself morning, noon, and night. After about a month of this torture, one Friday morning came the offer of a "starring engagement" from my old manager, Mr. George Smith, who had taken the Buxton Theatre. The offer was only for a week, but I was to be a "star" and to have a half-share of the receipts, after £10 a night had been deducted by the management.

Buxton was, and is still, a fashionable watering-place, and I jumped at the offer. The journey by coach was expensive, though had it not been for my impecuniosity, 'twould have been delightful. There was a very decent company: Fitzroy, the best old man in the provinces; Hurlstone, a capital low comedian; Tom Robertson, Harry Byron, and the Smith family—a daughter, who became one of my leading ladies; three sons, one of whom developed into the stage manager of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham; another, for many years a faithful and valuable adherent of Wilson Barrett. Alas! the Buxton public were inappreciative of the "star" and the dazzling array of talent by which he was supported.

Our lodgings cost two guineas a week, and my share

of the receipts amounted to thirty shillings! Still, my name was in large letters, and I sent those Buxton playbills over the kingdom, with the result that there came another offer to "star" on the same terms at Stockport, in Lancashire. Without a moment's delay I wired acceptance, and with all the airs of a full-fledged luminary replied, "Announce me for Hamlet on Monday and Richelieu on Tuesday!"

The first difficulty was how to get to Stockport. But I had a watch and an Albert chain, which I speedily hypothecated, and off we went in high spirits. But, oh! when we reached our journey's end, and found ourselves confronted by a phalanx of smokeless chimneys, and droves of starving women and children, and famished, wolfish operatives out on strike, we were overwhelmed with despair. Having succeeded in obtaining decent lodgings with a sympathetic widow on the outskirts, off I went to the theatre, where Charles Pitt (at that time an admirable actor) was enacting *Lear*. Strange to say, there was a fairly good house; but Pitt told me 'twas the only one he had had during the week, and consequently there was little hope for me. The audience was of the most primitive type, the prices ever so low, and the theatre looked so disreputable that I did not permit my wife to be seen in the vicinity of the building.

Contrary, however, to all expectation, I opened on Monday to about £30, out of which £10 was due to me—the first time I had ever earned such a sum in one night. Radiant with the hope of taking my treasure home and pouring it into my darling's lap, I was brought to

earth by a managerial intimation that it was customary to "settle up" on Saturday!

*Hamlet* was received with appreciation, and in two or three situations with enthusiasm; but *Richelieu* was a little beyond their reach. On leaving the theatre after the play, I paused (not altogether without complacency) to contemplate my name, announced in all the glory of large letters for *Othello* on the following night. Two of the natives were also contemplating the announcement rather dubiously.

"*Othello, the Moor of Venus!* Moor! What Moor?" inquired one.

"Why, a Blackymoor!" replied the other.

"Does he play on the bones or the banjo?"

"Neither, looney! but he plays 'Dicky round the orchard' with his missus, and cooks her goose!"

"How?"

"Why, he strangles her in her bed!"

"By gum! I should like to see that! But tell us, sonny, abawt that thear owd thing in t' red gawn and Billiegoat's beard! Was yon an owd mon or an owd woman?"

I didn't stay to hear the reply.

The weather got hotter and hotter, and the houses got worse and worse.

On Saturday night *Richard III.* was announced. When we had finished rehearsal, we awaited the opening of the treasury, but waited in vain. Our worthy manager had levanted with the week's receipts, and we were left penniless. Obviously there was nothing for

it but to make ready for *Richard* ; for had the news got abroad, we should have had no one in the house, or had even suspicion been excited, the band and the operatives would inevitably have "struck" for arrears ; hence we concluded to keep our own counsel, and improvised a pious fraud that the manager and his wife had been called away suddenly by the alarming indisposition of her mother. I had relied on receiving something like £25 for my share, but found myself literally without a postage stamp. The cupboard was well-nigh empty, and Sunday's dinner had to be provided, so I took my dress-suit "round the corner." "My uncle" looked inquiringly at the strange garments, and demanded to know what manner of things they were. Upon my explaining, he shook his head and growled, "Ma customers niver wear play-actor things like these yere. Tak' 'em to Manchester, lad ; they're no good here !"

'Twas evident Sunday's dinner must depend on Saturday night's receipts, and I went to the theatre with a heavy heart and an empty "Little Mary." The fates, however, were unexpectedly propitious. At six o'clock the skies became overcast, the lightning flashed, the thunder bellowed—apparently a storm was impending. We held a council of war, and got the doors open half an hour before the tempest broke forth. In ten minutes the theatre was packed from floor to ceiling, and the receipts amounted to £40, which meant, at London prices, a house of £200 ! Up went the curtain and on went the play like wildfire. Fortunately during the week I had been able to offer some little courtesy to one of the girls

who enacted the Prince of Wales. To my astonishment, at the end of the fourth act, she darted into my dressing-place (being a "star," I had a room to myself!), and in a breathless whisper said, "Hist! If you mean to get your share of the receipts to-night, get it *now*!"

"Now!"

"Yes, now, before the act begins, or you'll never get it!"

"Never!"

"No! The sweeps have made up their minds to throw you over and stick to the whole of the receipts!"

"No!"

"Yes! Our dressing-room is next to theirs; we heard them 'colloquing,' and the girls have deputed me to tell you. Now that you know, it's your own fault if you're done."

"Thanks!"

"Hush—hush! Let me get away! It won't do for me to be seen here!" and off she went.

Five minutes later the ringleader of this pretty little conspiracy came, and called out, "Beginners for the fifth act."

"One moment!" said I; "I should like my share of the receipts now!"

"Oh!" replied he, "that's impossible! The house has to be 'made up,' and that'll take half an hour!"

"My share amounts to fifteen pounds and sixpence, and will not take five minutes."

"But——"

"Spare your breath! Once and for all, I don't stir out of this room till I get that fifteen pounds and sixpence!"

That clinched the matter; I got my money, got my dear little friend's mother to smuggle it out to my darling while Richard was shouting, "A horse—a horse—my kingdom for a horse!" on Bosworth Field.

It may readily be imagined that my relations were the north side of friendly with my new colleagues after this little passage-at-arms.

During the following week the theatre remained closed for three or four nights, during which various plans were discussed for re-opening it, always without my co-operation.

It was known that the building was the property of a lady who had been a popular actress, and was now the wife of an eminent railway contractor; but no one knew where to find her; hence the opening hung fire, until her agent unexpectedly turned up and demanded the keys. Upon learning the state of affairs, he called upon me, suggested that I should take the reins and open the theatre at a nominal rental of 10 per cent. of the receipts. I closed at once with this proposal, and wired to Sheffield for Sam Johnson to assist me. He came by the very next train. His father before him had been a manager. He himself had been in the business all his life, and was a practical man. Taking stock of the situation, he immediately formulated a scheme for opening the theatre three nights a week (Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday) at



“play-house pay”; that is to say, we were only paid for the nights we acted. Some of the malcontents kicked at this arrangement. We were glad to be rid of them, and got better people to take their places from Manchester and Liverpool, with the result that in a month we cleared nearly £100! Country salaries were very low then, and in London they were not much better.

Of course I know now I ought to have gone to town, have taken what I could get, stuck to it, and waited my chance. The chances, however, were few and far between, and I had already discovered that with good luck I could make more in a night in the country than I could in a week in town. There I should have had to play second fiddle to Phelps or Kean, or bad walking gentlemen at the Olympic, worse “heavy” parts at the Haymarket, worse still at Drury Lane, once consecrated to all that was beautiful and dignified in the highest realms of art, but now degraded to tawdry, commonplace melodrama, under the auspices of the renowned E. T. Smith.

On the other hand, in country management I was my own master, could act when I liked and, above all, what I liked.

It was at this stage of my career that the theatre in the adjacent town of Oldham became vacant. Johnson had been there, knew all about the place and its possibilities, and he proposed that we should take it. From Liverpool and Manchester, Bath and Bristol, Norwich, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Sheffield to Oldham seemed a steep descent. I hesitated. Johnson reminded me that

Cobbett and W. J. Fox had been members for Oldham (Winston Churchill is to-day). I hesitated no longer. We went over by the next train and took the theatre !

As I have already stated, save in the watering-places, the country theatres did not begin till September. Fully convinced that the existing managers were prejudiced old fossils, we resolved to open in July, and advertised for a company. Our advertisement created a veritable sensation, and we had over two thousand applications. The very first applicant was Mr. Edward Wilson, the leading actor of the Nottingham theatre. This gentleman anticipated that he would only be called upon to play second to me. When, however, he found that Mr. Sydney Davis was engaged for the second business, a violent scene occurred, amidst which Wilson threw up his engagement, and important business called me to Manchester. On my return, two days later, I found the poor fellow had been stricken dangerously ill. Mrs. Coleman (always a ministering angel) had already been to see him, and urged me to go immediately. I found him suffering from hæmorrhage of the lungs. On calling in a doctor, it was deemed imperative that he should be immediately removed to the seaside. I discovered that he was engaged to Miss Fanny Robertson, then with the Roxbys in Scarborough, to which place I dispatched him as soon as he was able to stand the fatigue of the journey. Here he recovered his health, married the fair Fanny, and three months later I engaged the newly married pair for our first season in Sheffield, where William Robertson came to act for their benefit.

On that occasion I enacted Dr. Pangloss to his Zekiel Homespun in the very theatre where, three or four years previously, I had made the portentous announcement, "My lord's compliments, and he will be with you in the twinkling of a bed-post!"

Ultimately my old manager became my treasurer; Tom Robertson, his brother "Jim," Fanny's two sisters, Georgina and Mrs. Dornton (now manageress of the Birmingham theatre) were at various periods members of my company, and Mrs. Robertson and her daughter Margaret (now Mrs. Kendal) played Auntie Feemy and Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with me. Little did I or my old manager dream on that inauspicious night, when we first met at Leicester, that such amicable relations would ultimately exist between us; but

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will!

The old managers were right, after all, about July seasons. Our poor hundred pounds melted like snow beneath the sun, and we were left high and dry without a shilling. There was nothing for it but to close, so up went the notice. The old managers aforesaid were bloated autocrats, and many of them treated the actors like helots, while we, although lions on the stage, were lambs and good comrades off it. Our company knew we had lost our little all, and paid to the last shilling; hence it came to pass, the morning after the notice went up, that a meeting was called, and a resolution passed unanimously, that the company placed their services at our disposal for a month, content to take

whatever we could give them. To say that we were touched by this generous confidence would give but an imperfect idea of our gratitude.

The "Wakes" were due in a week or ten days, and some special attraction was required for the occasion.

*The London Journal*, to which had been recently added Sir John Gilbert's illustrations, was then a power in the land. A story called *The Will and the Way*—a palpable crib from *Speed the Plough*, the serious portion of which had been an equally palpable prig from the German—had been written by Mr. J. F. Smith, brother to our stage manager, and had made its mark. Sydney Davis and Johnson both alleged that it was eminently adapted for dramatisation, that every one had read it, and it was bound to prove a great attraction in dramatic form. I read it, subscribed to their opinion, laid violent hands on both comedy and story. In three days, with the aid of paste and scissors, and the glorious audacity of youth, I compiled a drama of "heart interest," as it is the fashion to call that sort of thing nowadays.

The experiment succeeded to a marvel, not only retrieved the fortunes of the season, but enabled us to clear something like £300, which kept burning a hole or a series of holes in my pockets, till I had made restitution in the shape of conscience-money to the delighted and astonished author of the story, who, when I handed over to him a modest honorarium, avowed that he thought I was a prince instead of a player. That was the turning point of our fortunes. At this critical moment news reached us that there

had been a rupture between Charles Dillon and the proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Sheffield, and that the theatre was to let. I took the next train to Sheffield, and returned to Oldham that night with the lease of the Sheffield theatre in my pocket !

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THIRTY YEARS OF MANAGERIAL DRUDGERY

Thirty Years of Managerial Drudgery—Charles Dillon the Idol of "The Minors" of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Ireland, and Scotland v. "The Young Man from Newcastle-on-Tyne"—The King of the Gallery and Ternan in *Richard III.*—Dillon's *Début*—The Old Member and the Snuff-box—Miss Goddard's *Débat* as Hermione—A Ruffianly Interruption—*Palmarum qui meruit ferat*—Our Opening—An Arctic Reception and an Adverse Verdict—*Sardanapalus*—The Feud begins 'twixt the Dillonites and the Colemanites—Victory remains with One To-day, with the Other To-morrow—G. V. Brooke—Sole Box Audience at his Benefit—*Slavery* beats the Record—Three Revivals and Four Evas—The Abominable Law of Dramatic Copyright—The Harrison and Pyne Opera Troupe—At Bolton with Edmund Falconer and Vandenhoff—At Manchester with Helen Faucit as Romeo and Orlando—Second Visit to Cambridge—Second Season at Sheffield—Louis Kossuth and other Celebrities—The Baron and my Beautiful Wild Irish Girl.

AT this period commenced thirty years of incessant managerial drudgery, the baldest recital of which would fill thirty volumes, and then leave untold half the story of the perpetually recurring vicissitudes which persistently obstructed my strenuous struggles for fame and fortune. I therefore restrict myself merely to rescuing a few of the most salient details from oblivion.

We had barely a fortnight to prepare for our opening at Sheffield, during which our indefatigable scene-painters, John Johnson and his trusty *aide-de-camp*

George, brother to Lewis and Meredith Ball, entirely redecorated the theatre. Taking for our motto *Palmam qui meruit ferat*, and proudly emblazoning it on the proscenium, we provided a new green curtain ; a new and beautiful act-drop—"The Disembarkation of a Grecian Armament," after Linton's famous picture ; and entirely new scenery and appointments for *The Hunchback* and *Money*. We had a powerful and excellent company, comprising a galaxy of youthful, beautiful, and accomplished women, three of whom were leading ladies, viz. Clara Wynne, Fanny Wallack, and Lilian Neil ; then came Kate Rivers, Madame Simon, Mdlle. Theodore, Fanny Robertson, Mrs. Vandenhoff, Josephine Manners, Eliza Johnson, and half-a-dozen others. We had three leading men besides myself, all of whom were not only accomplished actors, but magnificent animals. There were Harry Vandenhoff, Handsome Barry, Charles Diddear, Charles Moorhouse, Walter Grisdale, Edward Wilson, Morgan, Hawkins ("the Member"), the Calhaems (Stanislaus, his brother Frank, and their father), Sam Johnson, and one or two vocalists whose very names I have forgotten. The play, the players, and the manager were, however, but coldly received, and when I intimated in an occasional address that it was not our intention to change the bill from night to night, but that every play would be done as perfectly as we could make it, in the hope that it might attract for a few nights, the announcement was received in solemn silence. Evidently the gods were not favourably impressed by the newcomers. The fact was, Dillon's monster programmes (so he called them),

combined with his conspicuous ability, had rendered him so popular that his partizans regarded all interlopers with absolute aversion.

At that time he was manager of the Queen's Theatre, Dublin, and beyond all doubt the most popular actor in the provinces. When we first met, the idea of management had never crossed my mind, and it certainly never occurred to him that "the young man from Newcastle-on-Tyne" could ever by any possibility be a rival to the idol of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Sister Isle. Hence, at the commencement of our acquaintance, he was the most genial of good fellows, the most delightful of *raconteurs*, especially when his good stories referred to his own early struggles or his present triumphs.

In those days the king of the gallery in Sheffield was an autocrat who could make or mar a season. Dillon alleged that a few years prior to his advent, Ternan, a well-graced tragedian of the period, had rendered himself specially obnoxious to his Olympian majesty, who resolved to pass sentence of banishment. Hence, when, at Bosworth Field, Ternan vociferated, "A horse! a horse—my kingdom for a horse!" the royal ruffian in the gallery flung a spotted wooden donkey down on the stage, admonishing the indignant tragedian "to mount it and cut his stick."

Before we unfortunately agreed to differ, Dillon told me the story of his own *débüt* in Sheffield. He commenced his season with the comedy of *Money*. Now it will be remembered that in the club-house an irascible old member continually interrupted the scene



by bawling, "Waiter ! snuff-box !" The play was a new one, and in point of fact had never been acted in Sheffield. His majesty of the Olympian heights was so perplexed by these perpetual interruptions, and ultimately became so vexed, that at length he bawled, "Howd hard, Mesther Dillon ! Stop t' play ! Gie yon owd waistril t' bloomin' box, and let him spout it at t' pop-shop round t' corner."

Our immediate predecessor was Mr. Capel, formerly of the York circuit, whose wife, Miss Goddard (a monstrously fine woman and a very fine actress) had distinguished herself highly as Hermione with Phelps at Sadler's Wells. One would have thought this good enough for Sheffield ; but it wasn't, and when the Capels opened with *The Winter's Tale*, the autocrat of Olympus interrupted Leontes' great scene with Hermione by demanding, "Three cheers for Charlie Dillon !"

Apprehensive of a similar outrage on our opening night, I requisitioned a dozen policemen, and gave out in every direction that if any one dared insult the members of our company, the offenders would be immediately ejected and hauled off to the lock-up. Although these precautionary measures prevented an outbreak, they did not add to our popularity with the Dillonite faction, as I found to my cost on the following Friday, when I made my *débüt* as Evelyn. At the end of the play there was but a half-hearted call, and when the curtain went up, an Olympian inquired of the presiding deity, "What dost think on 'em, Jack ?"

"Well," replied his majesty, "they might be wuss !"

"Not much !" retorted his candid interlocutors.

Our first spectacular effort was *Sardanapalus*, every scene and every costume of which was an exact replica of Charles Kean's superb production, illustrated with Layard's discoveries at Nineveh. Besides a troupe of beautiful girls for Oscar Byrne's dance in the orgie scene, we had a detachment of stalwart Scots Greys, who afterwards "foremost fighting fell" at Balaclava. These noble fellows did me yeomen's service in the fight which I took the liberty to interpolate in the fourth act. The play ran for a fortnight, Miss Wynne and Miss Wallack alternating the part of Myrra, while Grisdale and I alternated *Sardanapalus*. Of course, I gave him the first chance, and he was very favourably received; so were we all—but *Sardanapalus* was in advance of the time. Breakers were ahead. Business was anything but promising, when Dillon was announced to appear at the Adelphi. It was imperative to get some attraction to oppose him. In the emergency, a certain Miss Anderson, a pupil of Miss Cushman's, a native of Sheffield, where she was highly connected, cropped up. She had been to America, had succeeded there, and there was no reason why she should not be equally successful in her native place.

Dillon was to open in *Macbeth* and his *Monte Cristo*; we responded with a counterblast—Sheridan Knowles's play of *Love and my Monte Cristo*. As I monopolised the honours in *Monte Cristo*, Grisdale was duly notified for Huon, the hero of *Love*. As ill-luck would have it, on the Saturday preceding the production a most ruffianly onslaught had been made on poor Grisdale's *Sardanapalus* in one of the local papers, with the

result that an enlargement of the liver ensued, and on Monday morning a doctor's certificate awaited me intimating Grisdale's inability to appear that night. Neither I nor any other member of the company had ever enacted Huon; but as we had determined never to break faith with the public, there was no resource for it but for me to step into the breach, and I did so—did it with one rehearsal, learnt the words, and, what is more, played the part textually perfect that night.

Dillon's star, however, was in the ascendant, and no wonder when we recall his programme. Monday's I have already quoted; Tuesday, *Hamlet* and *The Corsican Brothers* were given; Wednesday, *Belphegor* and *The Wonder*; Thursday, *Ingomar* and *Much Ado About Nothing*; Friday, *Lady of Lyons* and *The Musketeers*; Saturday, *Richard III.* and *Don Cæsar*. We played to empty houses until Friday, when, with the aid of the mayor and the Master Cutler's bespeak, we succeeded in turning the tables. Our programme consisted of *The Wife* and *The Mother's Secret*—a new play which I had successfully adapted from the French. Mr. Sam Roxby had called from Sunderland to see me. It was impossible to give him a seat anywhere, so he said he would go down to the Adelphi to have a peep at Dillon.

"It's no use!" I replied; "you won't be able to get in there."

In about half an hour he returned to my dressing-room.

"You were quite right!" said he, with a grin; "I wasn't able to get in."

"I told you so!"

"No! It was actually impossible."

"Of course—of course!"

"But it was impossible, because the theatre was shut!"

"The deuce! How was that?"

At this moment Johnson came in with the information that Dillon was standing at the back of our dress-circle.

"No one came down yonder," said he. "I can't afford to play to an empty house in Sheffield, so I've given myself a night's holiday. Tell Coleman it's *his* turn to-night—*mine* to-morrow!"

And so it turned out, for the next night he was crowded, while we were empty. This was the game we were perpetually playing at each other's expense. Had we only combined instead of fighting each other! How easy it is to be wise after the event!

Our next powerful opponent was Gustavus Brooke, who had just returned from America, and who had actually promised me to come to us, but at the last moment his business manager, one Mr. Wilton Hall, having failed to exact impossible terms from us, had gone over to the opposition theatre. Fortunately we had ample notice of his intention to play us false, and as I had never learnt to take a blow without giving a thrust, I prepared to fight.

The only man who could oppose Brooke in Sheffield was Dillon, and he was opposed to us. Neither Phelps nor Charles Kean, Helen Faucit, nor Charlotte Cushman were to be had at any price. In this desperate strait

a get-up of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* occurred to me as a last resort. The Beecher Stowe fever had enjoyed a great vogue during the preceding season, but all the dramatisations of the story I had seen had been mighty bad ones. Profiting by their weakness, I constructed a really strong drama, which I christened *Slavery*, and which occupied the entire night in representation, being, in that particular, the precursor of all the big dramas which have since been done at Drury Lane and elsewhere.

We were very fortunate in the cast. Moorhouse, a handsome young American, particularly distinguished himself as Legree; Fanny Wallack gave a performance of Cassy which had never then been equalled, and has never since been excelled. Clara Wynne was a highly emotional Eliza, who nightly moved the house to tears; Josephine Manners was the sprightliest of Topsys; Fanny Robertson was a capital Aunt Feemy; Madame Simon an excellent Chloe; while Clara St. Casse, an accomplished little vocalist, was a great feature in Eva. Nor must I forget Harry Vandenhoff in George Harris; Wilson in St. Clair; the two Calhaems as two knock-about niggers, Andy and Sambo; Sam Johnson as the fighting Quaker, and Charles Diddear as Uncle Tom. Within my knowledge there has never been such a cast as this, nor is there any likelihood of there ever being such another. Notwithstanding all this, we had a wretched house on our opening night, while we were assured Brooke had a splendid one to *Othello*.

I had been not only author and stage manager,

but carpenter and property man to boot, and was so thoroughly dead beat that I didn't get up till four o'clock next day. I lived upwards of a mile from the theatre, and could scarcely drag one limb after the other. When I arrived, at or about half-past five, to my astonishment and delight I found a seething mob surging at every entrance and clamouring for admittance. I couldn't get near even the stage door, but learnt that Johnson, who lived near at hand, had fortunately got inside, and had made all arrangements for opening. When an hour afterwards I succeeded in making an entrance, the theatre was crowded to overflowing. Every seat in the circle being taken, I had to make my way to the back of the gallery, whence I saw the performance from start to finish. The atmosphere was charged with electricity, and the whole thing went like wild-fire. It seemed too good to last, so I ordered a thousand free admissions to be issued and distributed for the next performance. On the following night Richard Cobden and John Bright were the guests of the corporation at a banquet. Thanks to the courtesy of the Master Cutler, I had an invitation. Just as Bright rose to respond to the toast of his health, our bill inspector came to me in a state of great excitement. "Mr. Johnson," he gasped, "says you are to come at once, sir, or there'll be a riot, and the house pulled down about his ears!"

When I got to the theatre I found the doors besieged by a howling mob clamouring for admittance, some with free admissions, others wanting their money back, while inside the people were packed like herrings in a

barrel or sardines in a box. We had great difficulty in appeasing the malcontents, especially our friends with free admissions, but ultimately succeeded in pacifying them with tickets entitling them to priority of admission on the following night.

The houses continued to get better and better until Friday, when we turned enough people away to have filled the theatre twice over.

It then occurred to me I would have a look in at the other theatre and see how G. V. B. was getting on. On presenting my card, I was informed by Mr. Wilton Hall that, "Being a benefit night, the free list was entirely suspended."

"That difficulty is easily obviated," I replied, as I flung down my money and made my way to the dress circle, when, to my astonishment, I found that *I constituted the entire box audience!* The play was *The Lady of Lyons*, and G. V. B. was just commencing the description of his air-built "castle by the Lake of Como!" He had just got as far as "Nay, dearest, nay," when he caught sight of his "box audience."

"Holy Virgin!" he gasped, and collapsed.

When one is strong, 'tis easy to be merciful. I hadn't the heart to stay and add to Gussy's misery. It was not his fault we were in opposition; so I improvised a pleasant little supper party for the next night, when we parted friends, and remained so to the end.

The run of *Slavery* broke the record. It was played for six consecutive weeks to crowded houses, and remained an abiding attraction when revived. Upon its

first revival, Eva was played by our prompter's daughter, pretty little Henrietta Watson, who married one of our most popular novelists; at its second, by the charming Louisa Angel; at its third, by the accomplished Margaret Robertson, both of whom ultimately became leading actresses at the Haymarket. Miss Angel retired early and married a millionaire, while Miss Robertson became, as every one knows, our leading actress.

This was not the only occasion on which *Uncle Tom* proved a Godsend to a poor struggling manager. James Chute, of Bristol, manufactured his own piece, or rather a series of pieces, which proved perennially attractive; while Edmund Glover assured me the play saved him from ruin in Glasgow.

*Apropos* of Glasgow, long after Glover's *régime* Jarrett and Palmer brought over from the States their version of the story, and produced it with a crowd of negro vocalists at the Princess's and the Imperial. Jarrett's manager, my old friend George Dolby, offered to bring the play and the entire troupe to my theatre in Glasgow. I accepted the proposal, and, my pantomime having proved a disastrous failure, gladly arranged for *Uncle Tom* to succeed it. Within a week or ten days of the proposed production, to my consternation I received a communication from Dolby intimating that the tour had turned out disastrously, had terminated abruptly, and that the whole troupe was stranded in Liverpool.

By the next boat I despatched a trusty agent with *carte blanche* to secure the negro vocalists and bring them to Glasgow, and within forty-eight hours he



returned with the whole negro contingent. Meanwhile I fished out my old MS. of *Slavery*, revised and brought it up-to-date, introduced the new negro melodies, and produced it with my own company in less than a week. The last night of the pantomime, devoted to the benefit of a great local favourite, a native of the city, realized £25, while the very next night—the first night of *Slavery*—yielded £200! The play, as usual, proved a great success. The intermezzo of song and dance in the early happy days of the story put everybody in good humour; but when it came to Eliza's flight across the ice (for which I had designed a number of icebergs, built upon spiral springs of steel), and when she, with her child in her arms, leaped from berg to berg, as block after block collapsed with an awful crash threatening to engulf her, a veritable frenzy of excitement arose till she alighted in safety the other side of the river. Similarly, at the end of the second act, when the fighting Quaker hurled the ruffian slave-driver into the abyss with the quaint refrain, "Friend, thee isn't wanted here," the whole house burst into roars of delighted laughter. Both these effects, however, paled before the end of the third act, when the despairing Eliza, to escape from bondage, leapt overboard, while Uncle Tom took a header after her, and saved her from the roaring river.

The play was done for a month to crowded houses, when it had unfortunately to make way for Mapleson's Italian Opera Company; whereupon we transferred the company to the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, where we had

a triumphal run for another month. Then we proceeded to Dundee and Aberdeen ; thence for a return visit to Glasgow ; thence to Newcastle-on-Tyne, Leeds, and Hull, where we terminated our contract with the coloured gentry, the most trying and turbulent troupe I ever had to deal with.

Before dismissing this subject, I recur once more to the abominable state of things which then existed with reference to author's rights. Managers in England and in America made fortunes out of this play, yet no one, as far as I know (save myself), ever offered a cent of conscience-money to the original author. My contribution, goodness knows, was little enough, consisting merely of a basket of fruit and flowers, a copy of Mrs. Browning's poems, and half-a-dozen photographs ; yet it elicited a most gracious acknowledgment. To the everlasting credit of the English publishers, it must be recorded that they paid Mrs. Beecher-Stowe a handsome honorarium.

Now, having made a jump of twenty years forward to Glasgow, let us return to Sheffield.

All Yorkshire men have a born taste for music, so at the end of *Slavery* we gave them the Harrison and Pyne Opera Troupe, which attracted overflowing houses. After this we did—for the first time on the English stage—a play of Paul Meurice's called *Schamyl, The Warrior Prophet of Circassia*, and another called *The Courier of Lyons*, afterwards done by Charles Reade for Charles Kean, and since rendered popular by Irving's splendid performance of Lesurque and Dubosc. When my adaptation was first done, I was pretty well satisfied with

it and with my own impersonation of the dual parts ; but when I saw Reade's version, and Kean in it, I hesitated as to whether I should act mine again ; and, ultimately, when I saw Irving's rendition, I hesitated no longer—I put my piece in the fire, and have never acted it since.

I have before said I had the Roman drama on the brain. On the strength of the success of *Slavery* I resolved to do something for Art (with a big A, please, Mr. Printer !), and concluded to do *Brutus ; or, The Fall of Tarquin*. Every scene was painted from authentic sources. I went over to Paris ; had a suit of armour modelled on my body ; bought, begged, and borrowed everything bearing on the subject ; had my beloved Scots Greys for the mob ; invented a new contrivance for thunder, which frightened the pit out of the house on the first night ; and triumphantly succeeded in dropping £400 in a week ! I had made up my mind to follow up with *Julius Cæsar* and *Coriolanus* ; but, no thanks ! no more Roman drama for me.

At the end of the season we took the Bolton Theatre from Edmond Falconer, and did very badly. That, however, counted for nothing, since my visit to Lancashire procured me the pleasure and the honour (which I had long ardently desired) of playing Romeo, Orlando, Claude Melnotte, Benedick, and Charles Surface at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, to the divine Helen Faucit.

On my return to Bolton, I repeated nearly all these parts to her charming niece, the lovely Kate Saville, who was my own juvenile lady.

When we finished in Bolton, I returned to dear old Hooper, in dear old Cambridge, from whence we returned to Sheffield, where a very remarkable event occurred at the commencement of our second season.

It is within living memory that, on the collapse of the Hungarian Revolution, Louis Kossuth and his patriotic colleagues fled across the frontier, pursued by the Austrian troops, who peremptorily demanded their immediate surrender by the Turks. To the eternal honour, however, of the much-maligned Ottoman, the Sublime Porte indignantly refused compliance with the infamous demand. On their ultimate release, the patriots came to England, where they met with a triumphant reception. Having the honour to be a member of the deputation formed for the purpose of according them a welcome, I can testify from personal observation that they met with no greater sympathy in the United Kingdom than in smoky old Sheffield. Upon being presented to the illustrious exile, I was so struck with the purity and the copiousness of his English vocabulary that I ventured to remark, "It is Elizabethan, sir!"

"Small wonder!" replied Kossuth, "since I learnt it in Turkey from your Shakespeare and the Bible!"

"Without a tutor?"

"I can't quite say that. I had the help of a friend who had sojourned in your England for a year or two!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes indeed, and here he is! Eljah, let me introduce you!"

The next moment I found myself face to face with the baron ! The moment after that I found myself not only face to face, but literally in the arms of Norah, who embraced me with effusion.

My beautiful wild Irish girl had now become the baroness, which reminds me, I have not explained the circumstances which led to our *rencontre* at Coventry, where she informed me that she had joined Eljah in Hungary, that they were married there, that she had followed him to the war, fled to Turkey with him, returned to England with him, shared his parlous fortunes till he was stricken down with enteric fever and left penniless at Guy's Hospital. Driven to despair, in the last extremity, for his sake, even more than her own, she was induced to accept £50 for disporting herself as Lady Godiva. That £50 saved his life, as a similar contribution from the kind soul had formerly saved mine.

The last time I ever saw Norah was quite recently at the Coronation, to which she came in gorgeous array with Eljah and their beautiful and patriarchal family.

The baron has long since been restored to his ancestral domains near Buda Pesth, and is now one of the pillars of young Kossuth's party in the Hungarian Parliament, while the baroness has become a grandmamma.

I have a standing invitation, and some of these days hope to "fight my young encounters o'er again" with my dear old friends.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### *OUR SECOND SEASON AT SHEFFIELD AND OUR FIRST AT LINCOLN*

Sims Reeves and his Opera Company—Youth the Season is for Joy—A Real Good Time—Claude Melnotte with Helen Faucit and Charles Surface—With William Farren (*"The Cock Salmon"*)—Charlotte Cushman—Second Visit to Lincoln—A Mysterious Old Gentleman makes me Lessee—The New Theatre, Sheffield—A Masked Ball at Drury Lane—The Renowned E. T. Smith and the Alhambra.

DURING the season, which had fluctuated between extremes of business, we had two or three doses of Dillon at the Adelphi, and whenever it was possible got some celebrity to oppose him. We organised an opera company, with Sims Reeves at the head, accompanied by his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss, Farquharson, and Manvers, with John Hatton as conductor, supported by a dozen principal instrumentalists, selected by him from the Italian opera, in addition to the resident orchestra. We were not only indiscreet enough to incur all this extra expense, but actually lost sight of the fact that we had our own company on our hands.

About a month before this engagement came off, by a lucky chance Mr. Sheridan Smith (who at that time was managing the York circuit with George Owen) called and introduced himself. I happened to mention Sims Reeves, and Smith suggested that Lincoln Races

befell the very time of the operatic engagement, that he had the theatre there, and would let it us for the week for £30. We closed with this proposal at once. On arriving at the old city, the first thing which attracted my attention, after the cathedral, was the fact that the racecourse was knee-deep in snow and the races postponed *sine die*. The next was the apparition of my stage manager staggering through the Stone Bow, blind drunk and utterly incapable. My first task was to pack the wretched old idiot off to Sheffield. This done, I adjourned to dinner at the Saracen's Head, where the bold Sheridan Smith awaited me and his £30.

"But!" said I, "that amount was for the race-week. The races don't come off; consequently 'tis no longer the race-week."

Recognising the force of my objection, Smith consented to take £15 instead of £30. I gave him a cheque, and he went on his way rejoicing. Despite the weather (which was simply awful, and the postponement of the races), we did very fair business, and had really a good time. We had no rehearsals, were all young, many of us amiable, and most of us good fellows. We had roaring fires in all parts of the theatre, and always foregathered at one o'clock. Dinner was prepared in the adjacent hotel, and served at two, when I had the pleasure of entertaining the most genial group of guests that ever graced the board of a humble managerial Amphitryon. After dinner, till five o'clock, coffee and cigars, songs and dances, "hunt the slipper," battledore and shuttlecock, and "the game of speculation"; then to work with a will.

Time passed so pleasantly that I was surprised to find we had reached the week's end ; still more to find that Sheridan Smith had put in an appearance, and, unblushingly repudiating our last arrangement, demanded another £15 ! Having to make arrangements for treasury and the return journey to Sheffield on the morrow, we were not dining as usual at the theatre ; consequently the interview took place at the hotel. As I refused point blank to comply with Smith's request, he bluntly intimated that, unless he got a cheque for an additional £15, the theatre should not open that night, and off he went with the avowed intention of locking the stage door. I was there, however, as soon as he was, and the result was that he found himself on his back in the snow, while I retained possession of the theatre. When the play was over, we had both cooled down, and a compromise was effected by my paying his hotel bill and his fare back to Hull.

Lincoln, which looked so unpromising, actually cleared its expenses, while the operatic experiment in Sheffield not only landed us in considerable loss, but caused great friction and a rupture between Sims Reeves and ourselves.

Dillon steadily maintained his opposition at the Adelphi, and I was continually under the necessity of organising rival attractions.

Once it was Helen Faucit, with her incomparable Pauline and her divine and unapproachable Rosalind ; once Charles Matthews ; once William Farren—then, alas ! breaking up, but still great in his decay. *Apropos*, I am under the impression that this especial occasion, when I was privileged to be his Charles Surface, was



the very last time this distinguished actor ever played Sir Peter Teazle!

Miss Cushman also appeared for an odd night as Meg Merrilies, and was so successful that we re-engaged her for the last week of the season.

On the morning of her anticipated arrival, although I was due for Dandie Dinmont at night, it was imperative for me to go to Bradford to see William Harrison and Louisa Pyne, who had just returned from America. Unfortunately, in returning I missed the train, and wired Johnson to play my part, and Calhaem to play his (Dominie Sampson). On my arrival at nine o'clock, to my consternation I found that La Cushman had not arrived. To give her time, the farce had been played first, in addition to which, the first act of *Guy Mannerling* (in which Meg does *not* appear) was also done. When, however, it was too plainly apparent there was no possibility of her appearance, Johnson decided upon returning their money to any one who demanded it, and to give the others tickets for the following night. *La grande* Charlotte turned up smiling the following day; she had "made a mistake in the date," she placidly said. Johnson was for closing the theatre and making her responsible. I overruled him; but the sequel proved he was right and I was an ass.

Now mark what followed. We paid Charlotte a certainty of £30 a night; our expenses, cut down to the lowest margin, exclusive of our own salaries, were an additional £40, so that before we could clear a farthing we must take £70 a night. Well, the entire receipts of Monday and Tuesday amounted to £50, so that

when we had paid her ladyship £60, and our own current expenses £80, there was a net loss of £90 on the two first nights!

On Wednesday we played *Macbeth* to £36!

Complacently regarding the return, Lady Macbeth blandly remarked, "Ah, my poor boy! I fear they think you are too young for *Macbeth*!"

"Then they've changed their minds," I retorted sarcastically, "for when we did *Macbeth* the last time we played to £76."

"Really! Ah well, I suppose it is the end of the season!"

Smothering my mortification as well as I could, I replied, "Well, Friday is my benefit; since you were absent the first night, will you oblige me by absenting yourself the last night, and leave me to depend upon my own resources?"

"I couldn't do that! The Sheffield folk would regard it as a grave affront. But I'll tell you what I *will* do—I'll *not* exact my pound of flesh."

"That's real good of you!"

"Don't mention it! Instead of £30 I'll take half the house."

She *did* take it—and the house came to £90; so my lady actually made £15 by her generosity!

At the end of this disastrous season Johnson was taken dangerously ill, and retired from partnership. I, however, didn't like to be beaten, and, having made a rather favourable impression in Lincoln, resolved to tempt fortune there again; so I took the theatre once more from Sheridan Smith, and paid him £60 for a

season of six weeks. Our company consisted of Johnson, Calhaem and his brother Frank, Hal, and Mrs. Vandenhoff, Mr. and Mrs. Billington, Miss Kate Rivers, Miss Johnson (Toole's "Johnny"), Miss Seaman (afterwards Mrs. Chippendale), and other competent artists.

One day, during a meeting of the Archæological Society, an eccentric old gentleman called, and requested permission to see the theatre. Deeming him an eminent archæologist, I showed him every hole and corner of the building, which was packed to overflowing with scenery and properties, wardrobe, etc.

"Glad to see you've so much valuable property," said the old gentleman.

"I had no idea this sort of stuff would interest you—an archæologist," I replied.

"I'm not an archæologist."

"Not!"

"No! But my brother Peter and I are landlords of this theatre, and, as we've had no rent for the past two years, I'm glad to find we've lighted on so responsible a tenant!"

When I informed my new acquaintance of the actual state of affairs, he invited me to dinner at the Saracen's Head, and wrote an introduction to his brother in St. John's Wood. I took the express to town, and returned next day to Lincoln with a lease of the theatre, which I held for many years at £35 per annum!

*Apròpos* of leases, the proprietors of the Sheffield Theatre had been urged by Dillon, year after year, to alter and enlarge the building. Year after year, they had promised to do so, and at last they were actually

about to fulfil their promise. When this became known, there was a feud between the Dillonites and the Colemanites. The former (who were the great majority) maintained that Dillon ought to have the new theatre; the latter (very much in the minority) urged that I was entitled to it, and the secretary promised, if I would pay a deposit of £300 within a given time the lease should be mine. Now Dillon owed some hundred and odd pounds for arrears, and a trusty emissary called and offered on his behalf to pay the arrears, in addition to the deposit, if the lease were guaranteed to him. This was a brand plucked from the burning, and the proprietors hesitated. While they hesitated I went to town, in the hope of raising the £300. It was the Derby Day. There was a masked ball at Drury Lane that night, and I invested half a guinea to see the fun. Fun? 'Twas a ghastly and dispiriting sight. While wandering about, aimless and disconsolate, I felt a smart tap on my shoulder. Turning rather angrily, I was confronted by a sharp, shrewd-looking fellow of middle age.

"How are you? Glad to see you!" said he.

"You've the advantage of me," I growled.

"Glad to hear it, for it strikes me a fellow would have to get up pretty early to take advantage of you."

"H'm! You are complimentary, sir."

"Dooze a bit, but I know a smart chap when I see him. If I'm not mistaken, you are young Coleman?"

"My name is Coleman, sir."

"And mine is Smith!"

"An unusual name, but I think I've heard it once or twice before."

"Very likely, but I'm *the* Smith."

"Not E. T. Smith?"

"The very identical flute. 'Put it thar,' as the Yanks say. Now come and smile," and, leading the way to his sanctum, he broached a bottle of champagne. Then continuing, he said, "Doosed sight better have come to me for Reade's piece than have stayed messing about that beastly old Sheffield, to get left in the cold after all."

"Left in the cold? What do you mean?"

"I mean that Dillon was here last night with his father-in-law, old Conquest of the Grecian, bragging that they've secured the new theatre at Sheffield and that you've got the dirty kick-out!"

"We shall see about that!"

"That's hearty! I like a chap who don't know when he's licked. But how are you going to get in?"

"With £300, if I can get it."

"If you can get it? You don't mean to say you haven't got it, then?"

"Not a cent!"

"H'm! What security?"

"None!"

"Well, look here, sonny, I like the cut of your jib, so come to me at ten o'clock to-morrow, and you shall have your three hundred quid!"

In the morning I was with him to the moment. He had already written me an introduction to Mr. Seale, of the firm of Seale, Lowe & Co., bankers, whose place of business stood upon the very spot where the Empire Theatre now stands. Before the clock struck eleven, I

had that £300, and before it struck twelve, I was on my way to Sheffield. Smith, however, had been rightly informed—Dillon had secured the new theatre, and I was “left in the cold.”

It was no use crying over spilt milk, so I made my way to the station, bent upon joining my wife, who was staying with my sisters, who had just succeeded in inaugurating a branch of the Harley Street Queen's College in Manchester. To beguile the journey there I bought a copy of *The Era* at the railway bookstall. The very first thing which caught my eye on the front page were these words, “The theatres of the Worcester Circuit, Worcester, Shrewsbury, and Coventry to let, with immediate possession !” Walking direct to the telegraph office, I wired my old manager Bennett, “Am coming by first train to take the theatres.” With that I took the train for Worcester, and on my arrival took the theatres. And E. T. S.? One day, five years later, during one of my unusual spells of prosperity, when he had become manager of Her Majesty's and the Lyceum, proprietor of Cremorne and half-a-dozen restaurants in various parts of London, while walking through Coventry Street, Leicester Square, I saw him standing in the doorway of the wine-vaults at the corner, his hands thrust in his breeches pocket, his hat cocked at the back of his head, looking very troubled and apparently lost in a brown study.

“Hello !” said I, “what's wrong, old man ?”

“I am !”

“How's that ?”

“Well, I'm in a hole !”

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### *OUR SECOND SEASON AT SHEFFIELD AND OUR FIRST AT LINCOLN*

Sims Reeves and his Opera Company—Youth the Season is for Joy—A Real Good Time—Claude Melnotte with Helen Faucit and Charles Surface—With William Farren (*"The Cock Salmon"*)—Charlotte Cushman—Second Visit to Lincoln—A Mysterious Old Gentleman makes me Lessee—The New Theatre, Sheffield—A Masked Ball at Drury Lane—The Renowned E. T. Smith and the Alhambra.

DURING the season, which had fluctuated between extremes of business, we had two or three doses of Dillon at the Adelphi, and whenever it was possible got some celebrity to oppose him. We organised an opera company, with Sims Reeves at the head, accompanied by his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss, Farquharson, and Manvers, with John Hatton as conductor, supported by a dozen principal instrumentalists, selected by him from the Italian opera, in addition to the resident orchestra. We were not only indiscreet enough to incur all this extra expense, but actually lost sight of the fact that we had our own company on our hands.

About a month before this engagement came off, by a lucky chance Mr. Sheridan Smith (who at that time was managing the York circuit with George Owen) called and introduced himself. I happened to mention Sims Reeves, and Smith suggested that Lincoln Races

“The deuce!”

“But you can get me out of it!”

“How?”

“Well, you see, I’ve bought the Panoplion yonder. Got it cheap as a dog for a halfpenny. Have to pay a deposit, and if I don’t ‘dub up’ by three o’clock I shall lose the chance of a lifetime.”

“You shan’t lose it! Not if I know it!”

“Out with your cheque-book.”

“Haven’t got it here; but I daresay a postage stamp will do. How much?”

“Five hundred quid.”

“For how long?”

“Three months.”

“Here you are!”

He had it, repaid it to the day—the hour; and that accidental *rencontre* led to the origin of the Alhambra.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### *IN DURANCE VILE*

My Heroines—Coventry—*Still Waters Run Deep*—Jenny Lind—A Concert at Coventry—Grisi and Mario at Shewsbury—The Thillon Tour—Pleasant Quarters in Jail—My Fair Fellow Prisoners.

IN my ignorance I had anticipated that the Worcester circuit would prove a little gold-mine. Alas! I devoted two years of my life to it with neither pecuniary advantage nor professional advancement. The work was incessant, the result uncertain. One week we took a hundred guineas, paid out a hundred pounds, and pocketed a hundred shillings. More frequently, however, we took a hundred pounds and had to pay a hundred guineas; so that by the time we came to the end of the season, the balance was usually the wrong side of the ledger. Our company was always a strong one, and I was especially fortunate in our ladies, who were invariably youthful, beautiful, and accomplished, *ecce sig.* There were Amy Sedgwick (who soon afterwards took the town by storm in *An Unequal Match*) and Carlotta and Rose Lecquerc, Caroline and Kate Carson, Miss Errington Mills, Laura Honey, Kate Rivers, Eliza Johnstone, Mrs. Charles Horsman, Miss Seaman, Miss Goward,



HELEN FAUCIT  
(Lady Martin).



FANNY KEMBLE.



ROSE LECLERCQ.



JOHN COLEMAN.



KATE SAVILLE.



AMY SEDGWICK.



ADA CAVENDISH.

MY HEROINES.



Mdlle. Theodore and Mdlle. D'Antonie. Our tragedian was Cathcart; our comedians were "Bobby" Atkins, Sam Johnson, the two Calhaems (Stanislaus and Frank), Stephen Artaud, Phil Emery, "Billy" Belford, and Charles Horsman. With this remarkable strength in comedy, our season in Worcester about cleared its expenses; but an unlucky disappointment which occurred upon our opening night at Shrewsbury ruined the season there.

We were announced for *The Courier of Lyons* and *Faust and Marguerite*. Of course, we never could have ventured on a programme like this, had these pieces not been in "stock"—that is to say, we had previously done them in the other towns. The company travelled direct from Worcester to Shrewsbury. I, however, was called to London on legal business, having to attend a consultation in Gray's Inn. Unfortunately I missed the train at Paddington; still more unfortunately, a telegram intimating that I was on my way home and would arrive at eight o'clock miscarried; hence, when I arrived, the audience—a crowded one—had been dismissed! They never came again, and the season was a ghastly failure.

At Coventry we did better, but not sufficiently well to recoup our losses in Shrewsbury. The pleasantest recollection I retain of Coventry is that of my friend Charles Bray and his charming womenkind, at whose hospitable board I was so fortunate as to meet the famous George Dawson and a somewhat masculine lady from the adjacent town of Nuneaton, afterwards known to fame as George Eliot.

In these small theatres we could not do the heavier pieces as well as I wished to do them ; besides, personally the area was not big enough for me—I wanted elbow-room : hence I endeavoured to cultivate a taste for the lighter pieces, but all my efforts in this direction were futile, and, greatly against my inclination, I had to hark back to the standard works. The only lighter piece which ever did me any good, financially or artistically, was *Still Waters Run Deep*, in which for many years John Mildmay (a part of which I was the first actor in the provinces) proved an abiding attraction. Apart from the hero, this play has never been better acted ; here is the cast to avouch it :

<i>Mrs. Sternhold</i>	.	.	.	{	MISS AMY SEDGWICK, MISS SEAMAN, AND MISS ERRINGTON MILLS.
<i>Mrs. Mildmay</i>	.	.	.	{	MISS KATE RIVERS, MISS MARGARET AITKEN, MISS KATE SAVILLE, AND MISS CARLOTTA LECLERCQ.
<i>Potter</i>	.	.	.	{	MR. CATHCART, MR. "BOBBIE" ATKINS, MR. SAM JOHNSON, STANISLAUS CALHAEM.
<i>Dunbilk</i>	.	.	.	.	PHIL EMERY.
<i>Gimlet</i>	.	.	.	.	S. ARTAUD, FRANK CALHAEM.
<i>Hawksley</i>	.	.	.	{	CHARLES HORSMAN, HARRY VANDEN- HOFF.

At or about this time Jenny Lind had proved a phenomenal attraction, and two or three managers of my acquaintance had profited by her to retrieve their fortunes—notably, Knowles of Manchester and Edmund Glover of Glasgow. Although the Lind fever had abated, there were other musical attractions, and, undeterred by the failure of the operatic venture at Sheffield, I resolved to again tempt fortune with music. A new Corn

Exchange had been erected in Coventry. I opened it with a grand concert in which I introduced Sims Reeves and his wife, Farquharson, Manvers, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss, the sisters Brougham and Madame Rudersdoff, while John Hatton presided at the piano. Result, a loss of £100! My next venture was with Grisi and Mario at Shrewsbury. Result, a loss of £120! My last musical experiment was a week's tour of Worcester, Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury, Coventry, Leamington and Cheltenham with Madame Anna Thillon, Mr. and Mrs. George Case, Augustus Braham, etc. With expenses at about £500, we took £300, escaping with a loss of £200, for which I, who had never given a bill in my life before and scarcely knew what it meant, gave my acceptance. Amidst all these disasters I recall with pleasure the delightful times I had with La Diva and that most accomplished of gentlemen the peerless Mario, and their *entrepreneur* my good friend Willert Beale.

The Thillon tour did not end quite so pleasantly.

Some months had elapsed, and I had almost forgotten all about it, and had gone to Worcester for the race week.

As I left the theatre, homeward bound, after the performance, I was stopped at the stage door by a pleasant elderly gentleman, who, having insisted on shaking hands with me in a friendly—indeed, I may almost say a paternal—fashion, intimated that he had a warrant for my arrest!

“Arrest! Good God! What for?” I gasped.

"A hundred and fifty pounds—debt and costs!"

"At whose suit?"

"Case & Co., on your dishonoured acceptance!"

"But I've never been applied to!"

"That's a matter I can't enter into. I only know judgment has been signed, and it's my dooty to take you or the money. Which is it to be?"

"Take me!"

"Very well! P'r'aps, seein' as how it's half-past eleven, you'd like to put up at my diggin's to-night and consult your lawyer to-morrow?"

"No," I replied. "To jail! Take me to jail at once!"

"Right you are! only step out, or we shan't be able to get in!"

"One moment," said I, awaking to the fact, of which the bold bailiff was evidently unaware, that the satchel by my side contained the night's receipts, amounting to upwards of £50. "Edwin," I continued, addressing my man, who was in attendance, "take this (it contains my letters and papers), and tell Miss James not to wait up for me."

"All right, sir," responded Edwin, and off he went in one direction, while my new acquaintance and I marched off in another.

As I approached the jail I recalled that, upon my first visit to the "faithful city" years before, when I caught sight of this gloomy pile, I little dreamt that I should ever be an inmate thereof. As we reached the entrance wicket the clock of the cathedral struck twelve. My friend hammered away at the gate. There

was no reply ; so he rang the bell and hammered again, and yet again.

“ Better to have put up at my place to-night,” he said reproachfully.

“ Much better not to have arrested me to-night,” I retorted.

“ Dooty’s dooty, and I had to do it, sir ; but here goes again !” and he returned his attentions to the bell and the knocker.

Presently a small iron-barred window above the gate was opened, and a man with a huge bald head fringed round with short crinkly black curls, growled, “ Hold hard there ! hold hard, mate ! Do you want to pull the bally building down about our ears ? What in the name of thunder brings you here at this unearthly hour, when all decent folk should be between the sheets ? ”

“ A prisoner ! ”

“ Why the doose didn’t you take him at the proper time ? ”

“ I tuk him when I could get him.”

“ Well, who is he, anyhow ? ”

When my custodian explained to the gentleman with the bald head who I was, he let out copious and florid benedictions. “ I always thought you an ass, and now I know it ! ” said he. “ Any one save a blitherin’ idiot would have waited till the races were over, and the man would have been all over money, and could have owned up ; but you, you [blank—blank], you’ve killed the goose to get at the eggs before they’re even laid, and to come



wakening a fella up out of his first sleep, too ! Oh ! [blank—blank],” and he added to the imprecation the eyes and limbs, seed, breed, and generation of the wretched bailiff.

Then, turning to me with the utmost politeness, “ Beg pardon, sir, for keeping you in the cold. I’ll be down in a minute.”

While he was getting ready, the bailiff resumed, “ A pretty pickle you’ve let me in for ! If you had only put up at my place—— But you player gentlemen are so darned obstinate ! ”

By this time locks, bolts, and bars were heard to fly asunder, the wicket was thrown open by a warder, and we were conducted to the presence of the governor, who again apologised most graciously for having kept me waiting.

“ Had it been any other week,” said he, “ I’d have given you a bed in my own house till the matter is settled, but being the races I have friends from Warwick staying here. But we’ll do the best we can at a short notice. Jim,” he continued, addressing the warder, “ tell the missis to let you have a pillow, clean blankets, and a pair of her best sheets. Take this gent to Number 9, and make him as comfortable as you can under the circs. Good-night, sir. Glad to make your acquaintance. Of course, you’ll clear out in a day or two ! ”

As Jim led me forth, the governor again opened fire on his apparently unwelcome visitor.

Passing corridor after corridor, I was led out into the open until we approached a palisaded enclosure,

befell the very time of the operatic engagement, that he had the theatre there, and would let it us for the week for £30. We closed with this proposal at once. On arriving at the old city, the first thing which attracted my attention, after the cathedral, was the fact that the racecourse was knee-deep in snow and the races postponed *sine die*. The next was the apparition of my stage manager staggering through the Stone Bow, blind drunk and utterly incapable. My first task was to pack the wretched old idiot off to Sheffield. This done, I adjourned to dinner at the Saracen's Head, where the bold Sheridan Smith awaited me and his £30.

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which was duly opened, various doors unlocked, until I was conducted to a room on the first floor, where, with the aid of the clean sheets and blankets, the aforesaid Jim improvised a comfortable bed, unbuttoned my boots, tucked me up, and left me, and a minute afterwards I was sleeping as if bars and bolts and bailiffs were not in existence.

When awakened the next morning by the dissonant ding-dong of a cracked bell, I hadn't the faintest idea where I was.

It was fair daylight. The sun streamed in through the window above my head, and cast the shadow of iron bars on the wall opposite. Even then I did not quite clearly comprehend the situation. I had a sort of hazy idea that I was still Don Cæsar and was repeating the prison scene of the night previous. At this moment arose the tramp, tramp, of measured footsteps, words of command, "Left foot foremost! quick march!"

Jumping up and peering through the window bars I saw "my honourable friends from the other side" taking their morning exercise under the supervision of "Jim" and half a dozen of his colleagues. "My honourable friends," all in the livery of the broad arrow, were a gang of hang-gallows ruffians with shifty eyes and "foreheads villainous low." As they sullenly kept time to the beat of Jim's rattan, they conveyed the idea to my mind that, if they only had the ghost of a chance, they would make short work of Jim and his friends. The picture was not without its humorous side. The last fellow to march round was a ferocious-looking brute of a red-

headed hunchback, who squinted and had the most celestial of celestial noses. Every other minute he lagged in the rear. Each time he did so, Jim administered a little gentle persuasion with a rattan to his most vulnerable part ; whereupon the ruffian emitted a roar like a hyena, paused as if about to make a spring upon Jim, thought better of it, folded his arms upon his chest, resumed his dignity, and marched along like a Christian martyr assisting at his own obsequies. It was impossible to resist laughter at this grotesque sight. When I laugh I am unfortunately heard. Now it was evident that my honourable friends heard me on this occasion. Laughter is contagious. They began to laugh ; then Jim and his friends followed suit. The only person who did not respond was my "honourable friend" Quilp, who squirmed with dignified indignation until he could stand it no longer, and let fly at Jim, who was evidently accustomed to these playful little ebullitions, for he immediately brought his assailant to earth, and lugged him off by the scruff of the neck to the Black Hole.

Then came another bell, and my "honourable friends" departed, evidently for breakfast. Presently came Jim with my boots, a basin of water, soap, and towel.

"I'll leave the door open, and you'll find breakfast ready in the room below, sir," said he, as he disappeared.

As I made my rough toilette I ruefully conjured up the primitive repast which doubtless awaited me—a pint of "skilly" and a pound of stale brown bread ! When I got downstairs, lo ! an agreeable surprise ! The table was heaped with good things—fruit, fish, fowl, bacon and eggs, marmalade, buttered toast, and delicious coffee.

To my still greater astonishment, I found my excellent good friend, the landlord of the Harvest Home, in attendance.

"This is awfully kind of you, Stubbs," said I.

"Not a bit, sir ! "

"But it is, I tell you ; I never dreamt of it."

"No more did I. The fact is, I've been here for a fortnight preparing my schedule !"

"The deuce !"

"Oh yes ! There ain't a soul in our ward but our two selves, and it's awful lonely. To be sure, the governor (who's no end of a brick !) has lent me his skittles ; but he daren't look in, and there ain't much fun in playing the game by yourself. However, thank goodness, now you are here, we can take a hand after dinner. That reminds me, breakfast is waitin'. Won't you begin?"

"Will you join me ?"

"Will I ? Rather ! Only too glad of the chance !"

"But who in the name of fate has provided all these good things ?"

"Jim says it was your landlady, who's a right down good sort."

"She is that !"

Then we fell to, and I never enjoyed anything more in my life. After breakfast, Edwin brought me clean linen, pens, ink, and paper, and I set the wires to work, in communication with my wife and sisters and my solicitor. Later in the day my dear old landlady brought me a sumptuous dinner and a bottle of Château Margaux. Towards the evening, after a general lock up on the other side, the governor gave me a look in.

"When do you think you'll be out?" he inquired.

"To-morrow or next day."

"Glad to hear it! I want to make your stay as comfortable as possible, so you can turn out and walk round the grounds for an hour or two before you turn in for the night. I'll show you the way!" So saying, he leisurely led me round the enclosure.

"Look here," said he, "in yon place is a young girl of sixteen. Father's a poacher and a bad lot. She's accused of receiving stolen goods, and it's likely to go hard with her. Doosid pretty and all that, and as cunning as they make 'em. Now mind you don't go spooning there!"

"By-bye till it strikes eight, when you must turn in to roost!" and away he went while I pursued my lonely rounds. Presently I came to a tall imposing edifice which towered above the prison walls. At a window overlooking us sat two stylish young girls! I stopped; they started up. I bowed; they smiled graciously. Singular to relate, they had been in the boxes the night before, and had seen me disport myself as Claude Melnotte and Don Cæsar de Bazan! The recognition had been spontaneous and simultaneous, and set me thinking as to where they were staying and who and what they were. While pondering the matter, I approached the forbidden spot, the cage in which the girl of sixteen was immured, and, lo! there she stood at the window. The governor was right—she was "deuced pretty," pretty as a picture. Of middle height, slender, but well proportioned, face a clear-cut oval, straight short nose, low brow, rosy lips, jet black eyebrows and

lashes, eyes like a pair of purple pansies, a heap of fluffy hair, half ginger, half flaming red,—I really couldn't help pausing involuntarily to look at her. She accosted me by name in a low, cooing voice. I shook my head, put my finger to my lips, and passed on.

Presently I returned to where I had left the other two girls. They were there still. I bowed again.

"Sorry to see you here!" they both said.

"Glad to see you, anyhow," I rejoined.

Then we chatted for a quarter of an hour about the weather, the races, and the plays of the night previous. They had never seen either before, and were full of the subject.

"Does Pauline know you are here?" inquired one.

"Don't know, I am sure," I replied.

"Don't know! don't know!" said the fair girl. (One was dark and one was fair.)

"If I were Pauline I should be out of my mind!"

"Just like you, Letty!" said the dark girl.

"Like me, Bess? like me? Didn't you say just now if you were Pauline you'd jump over the *chevaux de frise* to set him free?"

"That was my nonsense. To come to something commonsense-like—wouldn't you like a glass of wine, sir?"

"Thanks!"

"Wait a moment!" Presently they slung over the wall a bottle of port and a bunch of grapes, and we remained talking nonsense till the clock struck eight, when I had to bid my charming acquaintances good-night. Making my way hastily to headquarters, I again

caught sight of the poor caged bird of sixteen. As I hurried past, she said in a most beseeching voice, "Won't you speak to me?"

Although I had made no promise, I felt almost on my honour to the governor, so I merely shook my head.

"Am I so beneath you that you won't even speak to me?"

I couldn't resist this, so I responded at last, "I am so sorry to see you here!"

"*Me!* What does it signify about the likes of *me*? But *you!*—you whom I saw in Romeo and Lord Melnotte—— Oh, I can't bear to think of it!"

At this moment came the last bell, and I bolted, leaving the poor child sobbing as if her heart was fit to break.

The very next morning my wife and sister came from Manchester, while Seaman came from London. The girls expected to find me under the *peine forte et dure* or at least "in the deepest dungeon of the castle moat," and were a little surprised and I fear not a little disgusted to find me playing skittles with my good friend Stubbs. Dear old Seaman came to the rescue, and bore me away with the girls in triumph and an open landau to the grandstand, so that people might be assured that I was at liberty.

We had an enormous house that night, and they said I was all in my glory as Charles Surface; but I wasn't.

When I sang, "Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen," I couldn't help thinking of the poor maid I had left behind the prison bars yonder, and left, too, without even saying "Good-bye."



## CHAPTER XXXV

### *THE GREAT NORTHERN CIRCUIT*

Dillon's "Benefit"—His Rise and Fall—"Starring" at Sheffield, Wolverhampton and Stamford—I engage Charles Mathews and Sims Reeves—I personate Meg Merrilies—An Unrehearsed Effect—My Reception at Aberdeen—I take Theatres in York and Leeds, and produce Charles Reade's *It's Never too Late to Mend*—My Acquaintance with the Author—I rebuild the Leeds Theatre—Its Destruction by Fire—Henry Irving.

IT was quite evident that the Worcester circuit was not big enough for me, and apparently Dillon found that Sheffield was not big enough for him. His season at the new theatre turned out disastrously, and at the end of it he transferred his company to Wolverhampton, where, on passing through, I found, so dreadful was the state of affairs, that he was actually constrained to submit to the humiliation—I may say the ineffable degradation for a man of his genius—to have recourse to the ignoble expedient of enacting the hero of the Newgate Calendar drama of *Jack Sheppard* to fill the house for his benefit! He confided to me that he was as sick and tired of country drudgery as I was; but London was still closed to us both, unless we were prepared to play second fiddle to Kean or Phelps, or take a theatre.

At this juncture young Webster (Benjamin Webster's nephew) had taken Sadler's Wells for a summer season, and made me an offer which I declined ; subsequently he made Dillon a proposal of a more advantageous character, which he accepted. On his opening with *Belphegor*, *The Times* critic, John Oxenford, came and saw this inimitable performance. Next day there was a flaming article in that paper, and Dillon was famous. The week after that his father-in-law (Conquest, of the Grecian Saloon) secured for him the Lyceum, where for two or three years his splendid productions and his conspicuous ability carried everything before them. Then came a succession of reverses, and thenceforth it was a hard fight with fortune till the end.

For my part, finding myself debarred a suitable opening in town, I enlarged my field of operations in the country, annexed the Adelphi, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, and Stamford, which gave me much additional labour, but little or no additional profit. Then I was induced to take up Charles Mathews, who up to that period never had received more than £60 a week ; I gave him £150, with direful results !

Undismayed by this failure, I next speculated with Sims Reeves, and arranged a tour for him with *Guy Mannering*.

Miss Fanny Wallack was to have been our Meg Merrilies, but, as ill luck would have it, the day preceding the commencement of the engagement she was stricken with paralysis of the vocal chord. Every place was taken for the opening night. What was to be done ? There was no possible substitute to be obtained.

In the emergency Reeves proposed that *I* should do the part !

“ You are mad ! ” I exclaimed.

“ Deuce a bit ! You know the piece backwards—have got all Cushman’s business. They don’t know Fanny Wallack. We are only one night in each town. With your smooth boyish face and fair complexion they’ll never spot you ! Besides, remember it’s the only way out of the hole ! ”

It was the only way, and I most unwillingly adopted it. Strange to say, it succeeded to a miracle ! The play never went better, not even with *la grande* Charlotte herself. They didn’t find me out until the last night, when—oh, woe, woe !—at the very last moment, when I was calling on the mob to “ shout for the Heir of Ellangowan,” the treacherous hook, or perhaps the eye, which held my petticoats, gave way ; down fell “ the whole bag of tricks,” revealing in *puris naturalibus* (that is to say, in pink fleshings), from hip to heel, the somewhat exuberant “ continuations ” of a stalwart youth of five-and-twenty ! Then there arose a yell which I shall never forget were I to live to the age of Old Parr ! That was my last appearance as Meg Merrilies !

Finding my income inadequate as a manager, I relinquished my theatres, all excepting Little Lincoln, which, as the rent was such a bagatelle, I retained, and became a wandering star, with diverse fortunes, sometimes, not taking even my travelling expenses for myself and valet, sometimes clearing large sums. Of many remarkable experiences, one of the most remarkable

occurred at Aberdeen, where, upon opening with *Virgilius*, I found myself announced as "The eminent eccentric comedian." Evidently the Aberdonians took the announcement literally, and waited to see where the laughs came in. They were too intelligent and too conscientious to laugh in the wrong places ; evidently, however, they were disappointed, for they awarded the "distinguished eccentric comedian" a most freezing reception. I was deadly in earnest, and never played the part so well. When at length the curtain fell in solemn silence, I arose, and in one of those moments of profound depression which are apt to befall the sensitive and emotional actor, I sought shelter in my dressing-room, muttering to myself, "Well, I suppose I *am* an impostor ; and I have come here to the back of Godspeed to be found out by these barbarians, with hearts as hard as their native granite."

The words had scarcely left my lips when there arose a roar from the front !

"A fight, I suppose," I growled, as I tore off my beard and began to disrobe myself.

Meanwhile, the row continued to increase, until the stage manager burst into my room, exclaiming, "Call for you, sir !"

I will not repeat in cold blood what I uttered in anger. Suffice it was of such a character that the stage manager beat a hasty retreat, while I proceeded to denude myself of my outer garments and to remove all traces of the Roman father from his Roman nose and other features. I had effectually succeeded in doing so, when the tumult arose to a perfect Babel, and the stage manager made another incursion.

Time passed so pleasantly that I was surprised to find we had reached the week's end ; still more to find that Sheridan Smith had put in an appearance, and, unblushingly repudiating our last arrangement, demanded another £15 ! Having to make arrangements for treasury and the return journey to Sheffield on the morrow, we were not dining as usual at the theatre ; consequently the interview took place at the hotel. As I refused point blank to comply with Smith's request, he bluntly intimated that, unless he got a cheque for an additional £15, the theatre should not open that night, and off he went with the avowed intention of locking the stage door. I was there, however, as soon as he was, and the result was that he found himself on his back in the snow, while I retained possession of the theatre. When the play was over, we had both cooled down, and a compromise was effected by my paying his hotel bill and his fare back to Hull.

Lincoln, which looked so unpromising, actually cleared its expenses, while the operatic experiment in Sheffield not only landed us in considerable loss, but caused great friction and a rupture between Sims Reeves and ourselves.

Dillon steadily maintained his opposition at the Adelphi, and I was continually under the necessity of organising rival attractions.

Once it was Helen Faucit, with her incomparable Pauline and her divine and unapproachable Rosalind ; once Charles Matthews ; once William Farren—then, alas ! breaking up, but still great in his decay. *Apropos*, I am under the impression that this especial occasion, when I was privileged to be his Charles Surface, was

"Sir," said he, "there'll be a riot if you don't go on——"

"Let the brutes riot—riot, and be——"

"But, sir, it's a serious matter for me; my wife and sister have been on for their duet, and have been hooted off."

Now I had already arrived at the conclusion that it was through this gentleman's crass stupidity in announcing me as "the eminent eccentric comedian" the outbreak had arisen. Yet, after all, it wasn't the fault of these poor girls—and——

While I hesitated, the manageress (Mrs. Pollock) burst into the room.

Now I was not prepared for a visit from a lady, being stripped down to the waist for my ablutions; but my visitor was equal to the occasion.

"Psha!" said she, "I'm old enough to be your mother!"

With that she took my Hamlet cloak, which was hanging on the wall, and threw it over me.

"Hoots awa', man! Come up, or they'll tear the house down about our ears!"

With that she bundled me out of the room and on to the stage before I knew where I was.

At sight of me the row ceased like magic, and a dead silence ensued.

The fact was, I was metamorphosed beyond recognition. Through the absence of my beard and the ruddy make-up of Virginus, and through being enveloped in the huge Hamlet cloak, I looked, as indeed I was, half naked, and, what with my pallid face and my eyes starting out

of my head, Mamma Pollock told me afterwards I looked like a young maniac.

Disconcerted and angered beyond endurance at this extraordinary reception, I turned to her for an explanation.

"They don't know you!" she whispered. "Speak," she continued, "speak! let them hear your voice."

Facing them over the footlights, I demanded in stentorian tones, "Well, I am here! what do you want now?"

An equally stentorian voice responded, "That's he himself. Stand to your guns and let him have it, lads!"

Have what? Bottles or brickbats? I anticipated a bombardment of one or both, but neither came. Something, however, *did* come, which I recall even to this day with a sensation akin to ecstasy.

The entire house, rising like one man, waving their hats and handkerchiefs, burst forth into an acclamation which I shall never forget as long as I live!

The houses got better and better every night until Saturday, when the musicians had to be turned out of the orchestra to make room for the pit; even then there was not half sufficient room, and the overflow was crowded on to the wings, thence on to the stage, and thence up to the very "flies!"

Returning to fulfil my engagements in the south, I stayed for the night in Edinburgh with my friends, the Wyndhams, and (the usual actor's holiday) went to see the play, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Edgar was enacted by that excellent actor, Mr. George Melville; Bucklaw by Mr. Lyons, an equally admirable actor; Caleb

Balderstone by Mr. Fisher ; Lucy by Miss Miles ; and Captain Craigengelt by a gaunt, angular young man who, despite his gaucherie, afforded abundant indication even then that he would one day become an actor. I little thought, however, that a few years later he would develop into the picturesque and splendid Ravenswood of the Lyceum.

Looking back, it appears to me that I was never satisfied. I now got even tired of "starring." When in management I was not bound to act every night, and could have an occasional day's rest and an occasional respite from the railway on Sunday ; hence I resolved to make a new start, to combine management with "starring," so as to be master of the situation until I could reach the goal of my ambition in London. Business frequently took me to Yorkshire. My engagements in York, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, and Huddersfield were great helps to my income. Except in Hull, which had two spacious and one noble theatre, the Yorkshire theatres were behind the time, as indeed they were in London, and for that matter are still.

The York circuit, so long associated with the famous Tate Wilkinson, had become disintegrated, and I formed the idea of welding it together again. To make a commencement I bought Tate's theatre at Leeds, and leased the York theatre from the corporation, remaining their tenant for many years.

The most notable occurrence which distinguished my management of the old Leeds theatre was the production of Charles Reade's famous play of *It's Never*



*too Late to Mend*, which, after being rejected by every manager in London, was produced by me, with amazing and triumphant results, in nearly every theatre in town and country, and remains to this day a potent and abiding attraction. This event led to an intimacy which only terminated with the life of my dear old friend—a calamity which I have never ceased to deplore. Then came the advent of the “Famous Company of the Great Northern Circuit” (which ultimately comprised York, Leeds, Hull, Doncaster, Lincoln, Liverpool, Glasgow, and the Isle of Man) as the first provincial company ever accepted as a starring combination in the principal theatres.

At or about this time, owing to the destruction by fire of the Hull theatre, the site fell into the hands of a company which erected a new one.

At the same period I pulled down the old theatre at Leeds and began to build a new one. It will scarcely be believed that in this now thriving and public-spirited town, at that period I could not get the slightest help in this undertaking. “Alone I did it!”

The new theatre was built out of my hard-earned savings, I may say out of my blood and bones and brains. We were on the eve of completion, when an inundation took place, penetrated to our foundations, and thoroughly dismantled the place within a month of Christmas!

I had made every preparation for the pantomime. Ruin stared me in the face, when the news reached me that William Brough had retired from the management of the new theatre at Hull. I took the next train

to Hull, took the theatre, took my pantomime there, and achieved a great success.

Meanwhile, the new theatre in Leeds progressed apace, and was ready in September, when we opened with a splendid production of *Hamlet*.

In those days there were no travelling dramatic companies "on the road" save the Haymarket and my own. It was a period when the personal equation in country management counted for everything, and since "no man, barring he's a bird, can be in three or four places at once," the money I made in one place I lost in another. My labours were incessant—almost superhuman. It used to be said, "I lived in the railway train." Many and many a time, after acting one of the big parts, I have travelled all the livelong night from Leeds to Liverpool, London, or Glasgow.

My pantomime succeeded under my personal superintendence in Hull, and failed during my absence in Leeds. A similar occurrence took place in Glasgow and Liverpool. The money made in one place was lost in another, and *vice versa*.

Although I commenced the struggle almost unaided, I never could have continued it as long as I did, had I not been so fortunate as to have occasionally three or four valuable and sympathetic commanding officers.

At various times my excellent good friends and comrades Johnson Towers, Sam Johnson, Stanislaus Calhaem, Richard Younge, John Chute, and Wilson Barrett took the helm and brought my troubled fleet into smooth water.

To Barrett I am especially indebted for having upon

one occasion saved the Leeds theatre from destruction. Alas ! he was not present on the second outbreak, when my beautiful theatre was totally destroyed by fire. It had cost £50,000, and was insured for only half that amount ; still, I had that to fall back upon, and resolved at last to tempt fortune in town.

When manager of the Amphitheatre at Liverpool, I frequently came in contact with Henry Irving, who at that time was a member of the company at the Prince of Wales Theatre.

His industry and versatility were alike remarkable. I have seen him step, almost from night to night, from Dalton (*Ticket-of-Leave-Man*) to Aenone (*Paris*), and he was equally admirable in both. Even more than by his acting, I was struck with his filial devotion to that very genial and interesting old gentleman his father.

To me Irving was always a remarkable personality. I note with interest the stride he made from Manchester to the St. James's ; from thence to the new Queen's, where he played many parts, and made his mark in all. He did not "arrive," however, till the advent of *Two Roses*. To my thinking, no such amazing creation has been witnessed as Digby Grant !

Under the auspices of her famous father, Miss Kate Bateman had taken the town by storm as Leah at the Adelphi. She shortly afterwards married, and it occurred to her father to exploit one of his younger children. To this end the "Colonel" took the Lyceum, enlisting under his banners Henry Irving, John Clayton, Howard (of Edinburgh), and other distinguished actors.

He commenced with an adaptation of George Sands'

*La Petite Fadette*, but his losses were considerable, and Bateman, having arrived at the end of his resources, suggested that I should join him in retrieving the situation, offering, if I would provide the "sinews of war," to produce *Hamlet*, and guaranteeing a run of at least a hundred nights! Had I been at liberty I would have jumped at the proposal, but I still had the theatres in Liverpool, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, and York on my hands. It was within three months of Christmas, and I was preparing my three pantomimes; hence, to my great regret, I had to say "No."

Meanwhile, things were drifting from bad to worse at the Lyceum. At this juncture Irving succeeded in persuading "Hezekiah" to produce "The Polish Jew" (*The Bells*).

The remarkable impression created by this unique and extraordinary performance was confirmed by an admirable rendition of *Hamlet*, which (in company with Charles Reade) I saw on Irving's first performance.

His failures have been few, his successes many. Amongst the latter must be named Digby Grant, Mathias, Lesurque, and Dubosc, the old soldier in Waterloo, Mephistopheles, Louis XI., and Charles I., all performances of unsurpassed and unsurpassable excellence!

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### *AT THE QUEEN'S THEATRE*

"The Refuge of the Destitute"—Miss Herbert—The Advent of Mr. Swanborough—Marie Wilton—Sefton Parry's New Theatres—John Hollingshead—His Great Successes—I take the Queen's, and obtain the Support of Phelps for *Henry V.*—Signor Salvini.

AT or about this time an experiment was tried at "The Refuge for the Destitute," as the little house in the Strand was then called, destined to bear remarkable fruit. The theatre had fallen into the hands of a genial fellow named Payne, who had been an actor and a journalist, and who had a knack of attracting decent people around him. If a theatre closed anywhere in the neighbourhood, the disbanded actors made an immediate descent upon Payne. Hither came Johnny Clarke, Ned Gomersal, "Billy Belford," and the beautiful Miss Herbert, when she left (or was it before she went there?) the Olympic. Here, too, when doing my "bit of Bohemia," I was wont to look in nightly after the Haymarket or the Opera to get a laugh, or to adjourn to the neighbouring Savage, then in embryo, with Tom Robertson, Harry Byron, Bob Brough, Leicester Buckingham, or George Sala. When business was bad (and it was frequently bitterly so) my nightly visits were not regarded quite complacently by the ladies of the company.

Having occasion to see Miss Herbert at the Boltons'

on business some years later, "My Lady Audley" remarked: "So you're the young gentleman who used to come to the Strand every night to gloat on our misery in the good old times when 'the ghost failed to walk'?"

"Never to gloat, always to sympathise."

"I daresay! I declare we hated the very sight of you. 'Look here, girls,' I used to say, 'there's that supercilious young puppy from the country come again to see whether we are starved out yet!'"

Things had got to the worst at the Refuge when "A gentleman from the City" came to finance the affair. His family had dramatic proclivities: two of the daughters became actresses, two of the sons business managers, and a third, in a splendid outburst of precocious audacity, actually took Drury Lane and kept it open for six nights on a borrowed capital of half-a-crown!

"I couldn't have done it for less!" he assured me. "Had it been a florin, it would have floored me!"

Mr. Swanborough came to stay at the Strand, and his family have stayed there ever since. When Dillon left the Lyceum, his most promising recruit, a little girl from Bristol, stepped over the way to the little theatre, which was never called "The Refuge for the Destitute" after Marie Wilton put her dainty little feet and her bonnie little face inside it. A new era had dawned; the little house became so famous that it was not big enough to hold the friends of the "little girl from Bristol," who consequently migrated from the Strand to Tottenham Court Road, where the Dust Hole became the Prince of Wales, and the Prince of Wales became—— But that is ancient history.

With the new era came an irruption of new theatres and new managers. Mr. Wybrow Robertson, a shrewd man of business, erected and opened the Court, and the Imperial (a sepulchral pile adjacent to the Westminster Aquarium), constructed with such sagacious regard for comfort and convenience that one-half the box audience couldn't even see the stage, to say nothing of the actors upon it. Then came the Vaudeville and that cavern of despair the so-called "Opera Comique." Sefton Parry, who had made money at the Cape, erected a little theatre at Greenwich—made money there, let it advantageously, built the Holborn, opened with Boucicault's sporting drama *The Flying Scud*, which proved a great card. Parry then built the Globe, opened with *Cyril's Success* (the best comedy Byron ever wrote) acted by the best company obtainable; did another comedy by Tom Robertson; one by Harry Craven, and a burlesque by Burnand; yet he (Parry) solemnly assured me that he never played to his current expenses for a single week during the first twelve months of his management! Indeed, things went so badly with him in town that he was glad to come down to me as my stage manager at Hull, where he succeeded in retrieving his fortunes, built the Theatre Royal there, managed it successfully for years, returned to town, built another theatre (the Avenue), opened it unsuccessfully, let it at a handsome profit—finally built the New Theatre at Southampton, and died "a prosperous gentleman."

Theatres were not the only institutions that had changed with the times. The singsong of the "free-and-easy" sand and sawdust taproom, and the salacious cider-

the very last time this distinguished actor ever played Sir Peter Teazle !

Miss Cushman also appeared for an odd night as Meg Merrilies, and was so successful that we re-engaged her for the last week of the season.

On the morning of her anticipated arrival, although I was due for Dandie Dinmont at night, it was imperative for me to go to Bradford to see William Harrison and Louisa Pyne, who had just returned from America. Unfortunately, in returning I missed the train, and wired Johnson to play my part, and Calhaem to play his (Dominie Sampson). On my arrival at nine o'clock, to my consternation I found that La Cushman had not arrived. To give her time, the farce had been played first, in addition to which, the first act of *Guy Mannering* (in which Meg does *not* appear) was also done. When, however, it was too plainly apparent there was no possibility of her appearance, Johnson decided upon returning their money to any one who demanded it, and to give the others tickets for the following night. *La grande* Charlotte turned up smiling the following day ; she had "made a mistake in the date," she placidly said. Johnson was for closing the theatre and making her responsible. I overruled him ; but the sequel proved he was right and I was an ass.

Now mark what followed. We paid Charlotte a certainty of £30 a night ; our expenses, cut down to the lowest margin, exclusive of our own salaries, were an additional £40, so that before we could clear a farthing we must take £70 a night. Well, the entire receipts of Monday and Tuesday amounted to £50, so that



cellar and coal-hole ditties had given place to the cosy and sedate Evans's, with its delightful glees and madrigals. Then came the Grand Old Man of the Oxford and the Canterbury, and ultimately the inauguration of the palatial Alhambra. With the house came the man especially adapted to preside over it—a Londoner to the backbone, a journalist and a man of letters. It was there and then that the pupil and *protégé* of Charles Dickens made his first plunge into management, and succeeded beyond anticipation. Like another Alexander, he sighed for new worlds to conquer, and when Lionel Lawson of Jupiter Junior fame was building a new theatre on the site of a disused and discredited music hall, he found John Hollingshead at his elbow with a capital of £200 burning a hole in his pocket and new ideas bursting out of his head. The remarkable career of this remarkable man is so fresh in men's minds that I only permit myself to refer to two or three phases of it. First, the astounding rapidity with which the house was built, decorated, stocked, and opened; secondly, the infinite variety and the amazing changes of entertainment given there; thirdly, the importation of the entire company of the Comedie Française. During the Franco-German War these good people, with the patriotic intent of avenging Waterloo, resolved to make a descent on *la perfide Albion*, but demanded such a subsidy before they quitted *la belle* France that every one stood aghast save the enterprising impresario. Everybody sought to dissuade him from so hazardous an undertaking. Our mutual friend, old Mitchell of Bond Street (who for years and years had exploited the French and German

plays at the St. James's) alleged that he had never made a shilling out of his repeated experiments ! Quoth honest Silky : " When I first imported the most delightful comic opera of modern times (Madame Angot), my entire booking for the first performance consisted of *one ticket for the stalls* ! I have always lost money by the French plays, and only hold on to 'em to keep in touch with the Court and the Opera, and to improve my connection at the shop."

Nothing daunted, however, " Practical John " persevered, with the marvellous result that in seven days £12,000 worth of seats were booked at the box office of the Gaiety, and he ultimately cleared £7,000 by the speculation in six weeks ! At one period during his management he might actually have retired from the Gaiety with a net profit of £120,000 ; yet such are the amazing and almost incredible vicissitudes of management that after thirty years' incessant labour he retired from the Gaiety a ruined man.

Those who knew him best declare that he would be speaking nothing but the literal truth, were he to declare, like the French king after Pavia, " I have lost everything save honour ! " His friend Lionel Lawson found it more profitable to build theatres than to manage them, and having derived a handsome rent from the Gaiety, resolved to make another dip into the mortar tub. He erected the new Queen's, Long Acre, which was promptly taken, and ultimately purchased by Mr. Henry Labouchere, who, having lost as much money as he cared to lose, resolved to let management alone and to let the theatre. Would I had followed his example ! " But



*Photo by Elliott & Fry, 55, Baker Street, W.*

SAMUEL PHELPS AS HENRY IV.



here," thought I, "is the opening I have so long desired!" So up I rushed to town, went down to Pope's Villa, Twickenham, interviewed the astute M.P. for Northampton, and took the theatre, or rather took a lease of it. Then came the question of the opening programme: I decided on *Henry V.*

My friend Phelps, who took a paternal interest in me, had left Drury Lane, and graciously promised to make the beginning of my career in town the end of his. When I submitted to him my adaptation of the play (which included as a prologue the famous scene of the death of Henry IV.), he kindly undertook to enact my father. Here was a start indeed. The preparations for this magnificent spectacle came to £6,000 and more. There was not a moment to lose, so we set to work with all hands. Then £1,000 or £1,200 had to be expended on the decoration of the auditorium. It was the month of May; we didn't open till September, and a heavy rental was going on. Now a company of Italian actors had been at Drury Lane the previous season, and it was rumoured that satisfactory pecuniary results had been obtained on the "off-nights" of the Opera when they appeared. It was also certain that the leader of the troupe, Signor Salvini—a man with a noble presence and a voice like a trumpet—had made a great mark as an actor, notably in *Othello*, to the excellence of which I could myself personally bear testimony. Mapleson, the manager of the Opera, with whom I had had many business relations, proposed that I should take the troupe off his hands, and so get over the dead time till September. In an unlucky moment I listened to

the temptation, entered into an engagement for three months, and made elaborate preparations for the production of *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*.

Chatterton, then manager of Old Drury, and I were unfortunately "at daggers drawn." I had declined his repeated offers ; worse still, had taken Phelps from Drury Lane, and the lessee thereof resolved to "carry war to the gates of Rome." Now Salvini was not the only Italian tragedian in the world ; he had a rival in Signor Rossi. It was alleged, and currently believed, that these distinguished artistes detested each other with a fervour known only to fratricidal foreign tragedians. Anyhow, it is quite certain that Salvini's reputed success during the previous season was gall and wormwood to his rival. Chatterton wanted to checkmate me, and he had little difficulty in persuading John Hollingshead (who had scored so heavily with the Comedie Française) to join forces with him in exploiting Rossi against Salvini and me. The former opened in *Hamlet* at Drury Lane to a house of £10. A week later the latter opened with me in *Othello* to a house of £103. With our expenses at £300, this was not bad for a beginning. *Better still*, on the third night we dropped down to £18, and never got up again. After three weeks' inglorious struggle, the renowned signor, without beat of drum, at a moment's notice bolted to his beloved Italy, leaving me with my preparations for *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* in an empty, heavily rented theatre, with a net loss of something like £5,000 before the curtain rose on my *débüt* in town.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### “HENRY THE FIFTH”

My First Meeting with Robert Buchanan—Charles Reade and Henry Neville—Mrs. Hermann Vezin—My Adversary Chatterton—Miss Margaret Leighton—Augustus Harris—His Generosity—The Production of *Henry V.*—Robert Buchanan’s Address—My Heavy Losses—A Story of H. J. Byron.

WE opened at the height of the fashionable season, with expenses amounting to £300 a night, and as before stated the receipts of the first night amounted to £103, which in the course of a few nights dwindled down to £18. When Othello fled the country, Iago remained exultantly triumphant over his vanquished rival; but his triumph was short-lived, for the Drury Lane management put an end to “the farce,” as Hollingshead called it, by offering the victor in this barren strife the receipts of three nights and a *matinée* to cancel the engagement. The proposal was immediately accepted, with the result that in a theatre which, at the prices, held £1,200, the entire receipts of the four performances amounted to an aggregate of £45! It was useless to cry over spilt milk; there was nothing for it but to set to work to retrieve the past.

On the day when I commenced operations for my *débüt* a crowd of authors, actors, journalists, and old

friends came, some to seek engagements, others to congratulate me. First came Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, and Tom Taylor to wish me God-speed. Next, a remarkable-looking man of forty and a girl scarce half that age, neither of whom I had ever seen before. He was clad in an ample Inverness cape of grey frieze, with a white muffler twisted round his huge neck. His fierce blue eyes asserted themselves defiantly through his blue binoculars. His hair was a mass of golden brown, and his beard of burnished gold. His assertant nose (too *prononcé* for Greek, yet not enough for Roman) and dilated nostrils, his leonine head and chest, combined with a certain "come if you dare" demeanour, suggested the very image of a Viking on the war-path. The girl was tall, slender, dark-eyed, dark-haired, clad in some dark clinging stuff, and there were even then suggestions of statuesque outlines, which indeed afterwards became more amply and superbly developed. He carried a huge, hideous "gamp," pointed bayonet-wise at my breast, as if about to charge and pin me to the wall behind. The girl, who had evidently never penetrated Stage-land before, gazed curiously at me and the glittering paraphernalia of armour and jewellery scattered around, as who should say, "Where am I, and what manner of man is this player-king?" While they were doubtless summing me up, I took stock of them; hence I recall thus vividly my first impressions of the author of *The Shadow of the Sword* and *London Poems* and his pupil and protégée, the authoress of *The Queen of Connaught*.

And now to explain the cause of this visit. Walt Whitman had fallen on bad times, and his brother poet



had made an appeal to the British public on his behalf. I had sent a little cheque, and Robert Buchanan had called to acknowledge it. Although then at the zenith of his great powers, his vigorous attack on “The Fleshly School” had made him many enemies, and barred the doors of the theatre to him. It pleases me now to recall that the very next day I invited him to meet Charles Reade and other men of light and leading at my house in Wigmore Street, that I induced my friend Henry Neville to produce his first drama, and from that time forth commenced a friendly intimacy which continued, with rare intervals, to the day of his untimely and terrible death.

My next visitor was Mrs. Herman Vezin, who was engaged for “chorus.” She had been at Drury Lane for two seasons ; a third would render her eligible for the benefits of the excellent “fund” connected with that theatre. Having learned that it was my intention to open with *Henry V.*, Chatterton resolved to oppose me with a great get-up of *Richard III.*, with Barry Sullivan for Richard and Mrs. Vezin (if he could get her) for the Queen. She appealed to me on the strength of my old friendship with Herman to let her off, and I could not stand in her way, so she went over to the enemy. I was fortunate enough, however, to find an adequate substitute in Miss Margaret Leighton, a beautiful and accomplished young woman, whose personal magnetism, high intelligence, and magnificent contralto voice were eminently adapted to the classic garb and the sonorous periods of the muse of history.

My last visitor on that eventful morning was Augustus

Harris the younger, who waylaid me at the stage door just as I was off to dinner at Simpson's, where I invited him to join me. He wanted to assist me in the stage management, and offered to come for £5 a week. Unfortunately I was "full up," so off he went lamenting to Chatterton, who had not the most remote idea, when he, too, declined Augustus's services, that the very next season that audacious young man would step into his shoes with a borrowed capital of £4, and ultimately step out of them with a modest fortune of £50,000. Nor did I ever dream that a few years later he would offer me a thousand a year to assist him in management ; and still less that I should so long survive both him and his predecessors and live to write their epitaphs. These eminent men were strong-headed and frequently wrong-headed, but you had only to penetrate beneath the husk of both to find "OPEN AS DAY to *melting charity !* "

Whatever diversity of opinion might possibly have existed as to the rendition of *Henry V.*, there was but one opinion as to the splendour of the spectacle, which both Phelps and Greenwood and even Mrs. Charles Kean and Mr. Planché then generously acknowledged had never been equalled, while I am bold enough to assert even now that it has never since been surpassed. By the special grace of Dean Stanley we were permitted to photograph the Abbey and the Jerusalem Chamber, to model and reproduce the Coronation Chair and the mystic Stone of Scone beneath it. Mr. Kean was kind enough to lend me all the sketches and

designs which had been prepared for Charles Kean's sumptuous get-up at the Princesses', while every scene, every costume, every weapon, every suit of armour, every trophy and banner were prepared from the highest authorities, after the designs of Mr. Godwin, the eminent archæologist. Permission was obtained from the Horse Guards for the pick of the British army to assist in the Coronation, the Siege of Harfleur, the Battle of Agincourt, the Royal Nuptials, and the Triumphant entry of Harry and Katharine de Valois into London. So extensive were the preparations that we had the greatest difficulty in getting ready for our opening.

At length all obstacles were surmounted, and the eventful night arrived, when I made my first appearance, assisted by one of the best companies then in existence, including Mr. Phelps, Mr. Ryder, Mr. Tom Mead, Mr. Clifford Harrison, M. Leon Espinorn, Miss Margaret Leighton, Miss Emily Fowler, Mrs. Hudson Kirby, Miss Kate Phillips, and numerous other eminent artists. The first item on the programme was a poetic, inaugural address written for the occasion by Robert Buchanan. By the way, Tom Greenwood, Phelps's partner at the Wells, had kindly volunteered to assist at our “send-off.” When he learned that the address was by Buchanan, the wily old fox said, “If the Fleshly School Gang even guess that he's the author, they'll go for the whole crowd of you bald-headed. Better keep it dark and leave the rest to me.” I don't know whether he actually set the rumour afloat or not, but Charles Reade assured me that E. L. Blanchard (Greenwood's old friend) confidently asserted in the lobby that night that Algernon Swinburne

was the author, and that the assertion was accepted as gospel! However that might have been, the lines were splendid and splendidly declaimed by Miss Leighton, who stirred the house to enthusiasm with her majestic presence and her magnificent voice. Mrs. Seymour told me that shortly after meeting an eminent critic at a dinner party, he gushed over Swinburne's magnificent composition, alleging it was worthy of Shakespeare himself. When, however, she informed this learned pundit 'twas written by Buchanan, he exclaimed in a fine flush of virtuous indignation, "A fraud—a vile fraud, madame! Had I known it was by that red-headed Scotchman, I'd have crucified the wretch!"

Those who were present that night can scarcely have forgotten the roar which arose, which came back again and yet again, until the whole audience burst forth into one mighty acclamation, when the curtain revealed to view the war-worn lion of Lancaster lying beneath the shadow of death in the Jerusalem Chamber, nor the generous recognition accorded to Ryder, Mead, and other old favourites. "On their own merits modest men are dumb," but I may be permitted to say here that perhaps no actor ever made a more triumphant entry into London than he who impersonated the hero of Agincourt on that occasion.

Great, however, as was the artistic triumph achieved, greater was the financial reverse which awaited me. The fact was the losses on the Salvini fiasco, the prolonged vacation, the outlay on the alterations and decorations, and the enormous expense incidental to the production, had thoroughly "cleaned me out," and I had overdrawn

my account at the bank before the curtain rose. We took large sums, it is true—our first week’s receipts turned over £2,100. But every shilling was already mortgaged, and nothing short of a miracle could save us. The age of miracles was past. I was a new man, a stranger, an interloper. Every hand was armed against me. The end was inevitable. The hard-earned savings of a life of strenuous toil were lost, and I had to begin the world again. Nor was I alone unfortunate.

Alas ! poor Chatterton followed suit ; he was cast adrift from all his theatres, a ruined man, whose career was over.

This record would be incomplete were I to omit to mention Harry Byron, whom I first met at Buxton as a boyish doctor’s assistant.

Immediately preceding the end of his pilgrimage, his excellent good friend and mine, Alfred Pearpoint, the famous theatrical lawyer, called to inquire how the poor fellow was getting on.

Getting “on !” gasped the dying wit, who was quivering from head to foot in an agony of bedsores—  
“I’m getting off—and I wish I were at the end of the journey, for oh !

Dear boy, my poor sit-upon, it is so sore,  
I never felt so bad behind before !”

Though not a great dramatist, poor Harry was “a fellow of infinite jest, most excellent fancy,” and he threw up the sponge—

As one that had been studied in his death,  
To throw away the dearest thing he ow’d,  
As ’twere a careless trifle !

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### LAUNCHED AS AN AUTHOR

An Offer from Augustin Daly to play *Henry V.* in America—At the New Theatre at Edinburgh—Wilson Barrett, Herman and *The Silver King*—*Valpian* from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*—Charles Reade's Appreciation—Adaptation of Buchanan's *The Shadow of a Sword*—Charles Reade encourages me to Write—"Curly."

THE fame of *Henry V.* had reached America, and Augustin Daly offered me an engagement in New York, but he had only just commenced his brilliant career there and did not see his way to make a substantial deposit, which was absolutely essential to complete the contract, so the American tour fell through, and I had to fall back upon one at home. While organising it, Mr. Field, my box-keeper, introduced a *protégé* of his, a Mr. Herman, as a candidate for the acting management.

This gentleman, who ultimately attained considerable celebrity, was an Alsatian by birth, and by choice and association a literary Bohemian. In his youth Mr. Herman had emigrated to America, where he served in the Civil War, and had the misfortune to lose an eye at Bull's Run. When peace was proclaimed, he turned his attention to commerce, but failing in that department, he returned to England in search of more congenial employment. Lost in the wilderness of London, where he found every avenue closed against

him, at the last gasp he was fortunate enough to encounter Field, at that time proprietor of the Folly Theatre, and still more fortunate in being engaged by him to assist in the management thereof. Unfortunately, however, the Folly speculation did not succeed, hence the theatre was closed, and both master and man were left in the cold for a considerable period.

When Field obtained employment with me, he stuck most loyally to his former *aide de camp*, and supplied him with the wherewithal for his immediate necessities. Herman's condition excited my sympathy, and I engaged him there and then at a salary of five pounds a week and travelling expenses.

My friend Wybert Reeve invited me to begin at his new theatre in Edinburgh, which was, with the solitary exception of the Grand at Leeds, the most commodious, beautiful, and perfect in Great Britain. The majority of our theatres were, and indeed are still, a hundred years behind the age; some of them, indeed, are palaces in front, but remain pig-styes behind, and nearly all are utterly deficient in accommodation for the artists, who are often condemned to be confined behind the scenes for ten hours a day. This superb structure in Edinburgh was replete with every modern improvement. By an ingenious contrivance the ventilation before and behind was perfect. The scenery and machinery were worked by hydraulic power, with such simplicity and economy that the lightning changes *Henry V.* required were effected in Edinburgh without a hitch by fourteen men far better than they were done in London with eighty-eight men! That, however, which is in advance of the

time, has always to contend with ignorance, stupidity, and prejudice, and but too frequently comes to grief, as this noble structure did. Alas! in one short year it was converted into a presbytery!

From Edinburgh we went to all the principal theatres with unvarying success, but our expenses were so enormous as to seriously diminish our profits.

My new *aide de camp's* polyglot tongue (a barbarous *patois* of French, German, and American-English) and a singularly irascible temper made it occasionally difficult to get on with him; but as he was not only industrious, energetic, and useful, but had literary taste and dramatic instincts, we managed to rub on together. We had one especial affinity. I had *Pericles* (of which I had prepared a special adaptation) on the brain, and he had projected a great classic play which would astonish the world. I read him my adaptation and he read me his scenario, and we built castles in the air on both.

When the tour came to an end at Nottingham, he was very despondent.

"What's wrong, Herman?" I inquired.

"It's the closing, sir! See? See? Anozer dose of 'Alone in London' will about finish me!" he replied.

"Perhaps we can get over that difficulty," I responded.

"You may, sir, but, Gott in Himmel! what is to become of me? Well, there's one comfort—one can always reach the river. See? See?"

"Don't talk nonsense! If I keep going you are sure of a berth."

"But suppose you don't keep going, sir?"

"I'll see that you are booked somewhere."





*Photo by Bertini, Brighton.*

JOHN COLEMAN AS HENRY V.

"Take a Soldier—Take a King."



That very day I got him a berth with Miss Ada Cavendish, and three months later introduced him to Wilson Barrett, after which his course was clear. Barrett, always a tutelary divinity of undiscovered genius, discovered the authors of *The Silver King*, made their fortunes and his own.

Calling on Barrett a day or two previous to the production, my *ci-devant* manager went personally to announce my arrival, and this (so Barrett assures me) was the way in which he announced it:

"Coleman is here and wants to see you, and—sch! Do you know what he's in town for? 'No?' Then I'll tell you—it's *Pericles*."

"*Pericles*?"

"Yes, *Pericles* at Drury Lane! I know all about it, know everything he's going to do. Let's do it first and take the wind out of his sails! See? See?"

Needless to say, Barrett did not "see."

In adversity Herman was a loyal comrade and would share his last crust with a friend, but prosperity turned his head to such an extent that the Princess's was not big enough to hold him and Barrett at the same time; he decided to leave Barrett, and went forth vowing vengeance against his benefactor.

A few months later I met him at the Savage Club, where he immediately opened fire on me, exclaiming:

"Barrett is an ingrate! But I am avenged already. I left him with £40,000. Now, thank God, he has not as many pence. See? See?"

"No, I don't see, and what's more, I don't believe it!"

"But I know it! Then see how he has behaved to me—me, the author of *Claudian* and *The Silver King*—me, who made his fortune!"

"Made his fiddlestick! Barrett's fortune consists of industry, integrity, and perseverance, and you can no more deprive him of them than you can put an extinguisher on the sun with a nightcap!"

"But I tell you, you don't know what I did for him!"

"And I tell *you* I *do*! You blew the bellows while he played the organ. My good fellow, I can find fifty men to blow the bellows for one that can play the organ! He made you a dramatic author, and gave you a fortune. Barrett had money when you joined him, but through your extravagance he was in debt when you left him."

Poor Herman! He never got the chance of even blowing the bellows after that! His plays were hypothecated and ultimately forfeited. *Facilis descensus*—and steep indeed was his descent to the place from whence he emerged when I first knew him. Alas! he never emerged again, and from the day he left Barrett it was all downhill till the bitter end.

As for me, I had to return to the precarious, and yes, I avow it, the uncongenial task of rushing from pillar to post, from week-end to week-end, changing the bill from night to night. Occasionally I had a little rest of a week or a fortnight with my new play of *Valpian*, which, by the express permission of Victor Hugo himself, I had dramatised from his masterpiece, *Les Misérables*. This work not only afforded me consider-

able opportunities for distinction, but proved highly attractive in all the great cities. So struck was Charles Reade with it, that he came for five consecutive nights to see it in Manchester, and actually offered to exploit it and me in town. Unfortunately, however, prior engagements deterred me from accepting a proposal which might have changed the current of my fortunes.

Soon after this I produced—at Brighton—an adaptation by the author and myself of Robert Buchanan's noble romance, *The Shadow of the Sword*. I obtained great kudos in the part of the hero, Rohan Gwenfern, but when I brought the play to town during the dog-days (when every one was away) I gained neither money nor reputation by an experiment attempted under such adverse circumstances.

To make matters worse, my darling's health (always delicate) broke down altogether under the stress of long and fatiguing railway journeys. The doctors prescribed rest and native air, so we concluded to remain in town, where it was difficult for me to obtain a suitable engagement. Augustus Harris, indeed, as before stated, offered me one at Drury Lane, but we split about a trifle in which our *amour propre* was concerned. Both were wrong-headed and strong-headed, neither would give way, so that fell through. Tree also offered me one at the Haymarket, D'Oyley Carte another for the stage management of the New Opera House in Shaftesbury Avenue, but in neither case could we come to terms.

The position was becoming desperate when Charles Reade suggested that I should have recourse to the "ink-pot."

Upon replying that I didn't feel qualified, he responded :  
" You never know what you can do till you try.  
If you only write half as well as you talk, you'll be  
all right ! "

I did try—wrote a novel, which, of course, was  
rejected everywhere.

At this juncture a calamity occurred—my dear old  
friend's death.

Returning, however, to my scribbling experience, I  
wrote a little story called "Curly," for *The Graphic*, was  
handsomely paid for it, and my excellent good friend  
Chatto has since published it in book form in several  
editions. The rejected novel has also been published  
in several editions. Like many greater men, however,  
I have found literature "a good crutch but a bad staff" ;  
besides, it is hard to carve out a new career when one  
has passed one's half-century.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### DRURY LANE

Colonel North, "The Nitrate King"—His Goodness of Heart and Hospitality—Death of Sir Augustus Harris—George Conquest—*The World*—Recollections of Harris—His Managership of Drury Lane—And of Covent Garden—I take Drury Lane, and produce *The Duchess of Coolgardie*—I am succeeded by Mr. Arthur Collins—Speculations in Mines, and a Lawsuit.

ANOTHER career than authorship was, however, carved out for me by the sheerest accident. At a dinner of the Theatrical Fund some eight or ten years ago, when my arrival was announced in the waiting-room, a stalwart, large-limbed fellow of middle age and florid complexion came bustling through the crowd, gripped my hand and nearly wrung it off, as he exclaimed in an unmistakable Yorkshire dialect :

"How art a' ? How art a', John, lad ? Glad to see thee !"

"Really, sir, I——"

"Ah ! it's easy seein' thou dusn't knaaw me, but I've knaawn thee ever sins't thou livdst in t'owld Manor House, Meadow Lane. We didn't move i' t' same crowd then, but they little brother, Teddy, knaad me and mine, and used a'most to live at aar haase i' Hunslet Laane. I'm Naarth, lad, Naarth !"

My new acquaintance turned out to be the chairman of the evening, the eccentric Colonel North, known as "The Nitrate King," a sobriquet bestowed on him in consequence of his having discovered immense deposits of nitrate of soda on the rainless coast of Chili, and having established a remunerative market in Europe for that valuable fertilising phosphate.

The Colonel, then at his zenith, was a genuine Tyke, as cute as they make 'em in the North Riding, but as generous and large-hearted a Yorkshireman as ever hailed from the heart of England. He invited me then and there down to his palatial place at Eltham, where his hospitality was as large as his heart. Thus commenced an acquaintance which introduced me to the devious and dubious ways of the City, where I became connected with various mining and other enterprises—some good, some bad, some indifferent.

This remarkable man commenced life as an operative, a working wheelwright in fact, and ere he had reached forty had become a millionaire. At the height of his prosperity, when baronets and belted earls and noble ladies toadied him, and when a nobleman of high historic descent did not disdain to run his horses and to win the Blue Ribbon of the Turf with one of them, the honest Yorkshireman was never ashamed of his origin, and never turned his back on the friends of his youth.

I have seen his table crowded with fashionable celebrities, including the *crème de la crème* of Mayfair, all anxious to get a word in edgeways with him, but the guests of honour who engrossed his attention were a



couple of horny-handed Leeds joiners who had worked at the same bench with him in his apprenticeship.

At home he was the soul of boisterous but boundless hospitality. He kept open house every Sunday at Eltham, when nothing was too good for his guests—the most delicious viands, the choicest wines, the rarest brands of cigars, and, rarest of all, the heartiest of welcomes.

In the numerous financial schemes of which he was the head and front his name was the synonym for success. Before investing a shilling in any speculation he probed it to the core, and assured himself that it was sound and honest and had some reasonable prospect of being carried through. In these investigations his native shrewdness stood him in good stead ; besides which, he was fortunate enough to have the assistance of two trusty councillors, both of whom were men of the highest order of integrity and of distinguished legal attainments.

His rivals were wont to allege he was bumptious and overbearing, but he succeeded, and “Nothing succeeds like success.” Whatever difference of opinion existed at the beginning of the numerous board meetings over which he presided, they always ended, not only with his having his own way, but his own way of having it ; hence every resolution he proposed was carried by a substantial majority, and the magic word “Passed” was always inscribed upon the agenda.

Having arrived at the conclusion that it was desirable that various conflicting interests in the nitrate business should be consolidated into one combination, an im-

portant meeting of the board was called to enable him to unfold his proposal. During this meeting an event occurred of the most sensational character.

On this particular occasion I happened to be present at the inaugural lunch which immediately preceded the opening of the Hotel Cecil. After luncheon, a mutual friend came up to me and inquired significantly :

"Have you heard the news from Gracechurch Street?"

"No. What's up?"

"Nitrates are down, and your friend the Colonel has sent in his cheques!"

"Good God ! you don't mean that?"

"I do, though. There has been a stormy meeting. He got hot over it, but carried his point as usual."

He had, however, no sooner uttered the word "Passed" than his head sank quietly upon his shoulder, and he himself had "passed."

At or about this time my friend Augustus Harris also "passed." He, too, had had a phenomenal career. Originally destined for a commercial life, which he found uncongenial, though it ultimately proved an invaluable training.

When he became stage-struck, his father bitterly resented the idea. Both appealed to me for advice.

"Let him try," said I.

"But who's to get him an engagement?" growled Augustus the elder.

"I will," I replied, and I did get him one in Liverpool, where he failed signally.

"I told you how it would be!" growled the infuriated

father. "It's like his confounded cheek! When I failed, how the deuce could he possibly expect to succeed?"

The boy, however, had the courage of his opinions, and while cooling his heels behind the scenes at Covent Garden, kept his eyes open and learnt much which proved of service hereafter.

One day, when he called on me at the Tavistock, Mapleson happened to be dining with me, and I invited the airy youth to join us. He was "resting" for "want of something to do," while Mapleson was going on tour with his company from Her Majesty's. Over the walnuts and the wine an engagement was effected. From that moment Gussy turned the corner, and never looked back till he was installed at Drury Lane.

*À propos* of which, the story of his installation (which I had from his own lips) beats any romance. When he was accepted as tenant he had only £4 in the world! A substantial deposit had to be paid on signing the lease. In the emergency a sublime inspiration occurred to the would-be manager. He had a slight acquaintance with an eminent contractor who had built St. Enoch's railway station in Glasgow and the Aquarium at Westminster.

Down went Augustus to the Aquarium, found the contractor at lunch in an amiable mood—joined him—broached the subject over a bottle—contractor, sympathetic and enterprising, responded with alacrity—advanced the deposit—and Augustus Harris became Augustus Druryolanus. Nor was this all: the audacious youth not only leaped into the National Theatre, but

he leaped into the heart of his friend's charming daughter and married her !

His tenancy commenced within a month of Christmas—proverbially the worst financial month in the year. He had not only nothing ready to open with, but had to prepare his pantomime for Christmas, and lacked funds for its preparation.

By a lucky accident Mr. George Rignold, who was about to return to Australia, wanted an appearance in London ; hence he took the theatre for the month prior to Christmas, and paid a handsome rental, which enabled Harris to produce a pantomime with the historic name of *Mother Goose*, associated with the greatest of Grimaldi's triumphs. Triumphant, however, as it had been with the renowned "Joey," with Augustus it was a ghastly failure ! Still, he was there, and he held on. The question was, What to do next and how to do it ?

Desperate men clutch at desperate remedies. In the emergency he imported two obscure East End dramaturgists, Paul Merritt (who graduated in my gallery at Leeds) and Henry Pettitt, who assured me himself that he had served his apprenticeship as a super at Covent Garden. After all, what does that signify ?

There is no merit to be dropped on fortune's hill :  
The honour is to mount it.

And those young men did mount it. The ascent was steep and difficult, but

Near or far off—well won is still well shot.

And they got there at last !

They had learnt their business at the Grecian Saloon under the tuition of George Conquest, a practical playwright who was more familiar with the French drama of the day than any of his contemporaries. His method was to select a subject, arrange a rough scenario, hand over the skeleton to his collaborators, who under his direction and subject to his approval clothed the dry bones with flesh and blood.

The opening play at the Lane, *The World*, was their first unaided effort, the new manager taking the part of a fashionable scoundrel. The first three acts proved to be a thinly disguised plagiarism of Charles Reade's *Foul Play* (originally produced by me at Leeds), the last act a conglomeration of odds and ends—comprising a "lift," an accident therein, and a masked ball at the Aquarium. The play was not a success, but "out of the nettle danger" Augustus "plucked the rose safely." To be precise, he was the "rose" himself, for from that time forth he emulated the example of George Conquest, selected his subjects, arranged his scenarios, and collaborated with Merritt and Pettitt in the numerous popular and successful melodramatic hodge-podges for which Drury Lane ultimately became famous.

During the process he incurred much odium and more ridicule from the reptilia of Grub Street and from rival managers, who continually emitted a stream of innuendoes about "East End dramas and East End dramatists and the degradation of the National Theatre." Had he chosen to take the trouble, he might have retorted that (since all his dramas were produced east of Temple Bar) the Bard himself was an East End

dramatist and that Garrick's star arose in Goodman's Fields. Although he was wise enough not to rush into print, he had a good memory and never forgot, never forgave, these impertinences.

Despite the undisguised hostility of his assailants, he persisted in playing the principal parts in these nailed-up pieces. Referring to some more than usually acrimonious onslaught, he said :

"I know I'm neither Garrick nor Edmund Kean, but my pieces don't depend on acting, so the beggars may shout as much as they like. It pleases them and doesn't hurt me. When I've acted three seasons in succession and am eligible for the Fund, I'll retire and make room for some other duffer."

However, I have seen many an Icilius much worse than Augustus, and he played a scene, which he had dug out from *Azael* and incorporated with *Freedom*, with a strength and vigour which astonished and delighted me.

A few years ago, while supping with him, he confided to me that some day or other he meant to make a tour of the world—America and Australia—and that it was the dearest wish of his heart to play a round of Shakespearian parts. His ambition was, however, subservient to his common sense. "When my Sedan comes—if it ever does come—I shall have a little more than half a crown to play with ; that you bet."<sup>1</sup>

And he kept his word.

One day when we happened to be dining *tête-à-tête*,

<sup>1</sup> The subscribers to Drury Lane Fund are entitled to a handsome annuity in age and infirmity.

the news came of the death of Mr. Gye, who had so long presided over the Covent Garden Opera.

"I'll take it!" exclaimed Augustus.

"Take what?"

"Covent Garden."

"You're taking leave of your senses."

"No, I'm not. I was brought up behind the scenes there, and know every rope in the ship! But that's not all. Yesterday, at what they called a literary and artistic banquet, the whole gang of 'em went for me and my East End dramatist and the degradation of Old Drury. They talked about Art, too; the duffers know as much about Art as I know about Hebrew, but I'll give 'em Art with a big A. I will, by——"

He did take Covent Garden. During his first season he lost £12,000, during his second he cleared £14,000, then he must needs try a provincial tour of opera on a grand scale, over which he lost £20,000. Fortunately he never knew that he was beaten, and when the end came his modest £4 had developed into £50,000.

A few years ago I induced him to put £1,000 into a silver mine in which I was interested in Tasmania. I put the matter before him in a rather long-winded way. He cut me short, thrashed it out on half a sheet of note-paper in two minutes, and gave me a cheque for the money.

"How the deuce are you so *au fait* at this business?" I inquired.

"Simply because it is the business I was brought up to. I served my time with Erlanger's."

"Erlanger's?"

"Yes, Erlanger's, the great brokers. In those days they lived in this very house. I made up my mind that if the chance ever came I would live in it. The chance came, and here I am."

No man bore his blushing honours more meekly than this Napoleon of the theatre. His accomplishments were many and varied. He had a facile pen; spoke and wrote three or four languages with fluency. He was a capital comedian, an admirable stage-manager, and one of the most enterprising impresarios of this or any other period. Better than all these, "he had a heart open as day to melting charity."

Let me recall an instance or two.

A distinguished actor had fallen on bad times. The bailiffs were in, and it was necessary to get them out. I went to "Gus."

"How much?" he inquired.

"A hundred pounds."

"Here you are, old man," and he handed over a cheque.

A manager, at one time director of three or four of the principal theatres, had come to grief. I interested Augustus in him, and he appointed him to a post at the P——. Amidst his labours poor B—— was stricken down with paralysis.

I went to Covent Garden, and found Druryolanus rehearsing *Lohengrin*. "Wait a bit," he said. Half an hour later he was standing by the sick man's bedside, giving him hope and a new life. For nearly six months his salary was paid, and after that came to an end, Harris helped me to form a fund of £300 to give the poor old fellow another chance.



The last letter I ever received from my dear friend lies before me now. It runs thus :—

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

May 18th, 1896.

MY DEAR JOHN COLEMAN,—

I have just received a telegram to say that — died last night among strangers. No funds.

I have telegraphed back that I would see our friends to subscribe funds for the funeral, etc.

Will you undertake this?

I shall be happy to head the list.

Yours ever,

AUGUSTUS HARRIS.

We met for the last time at the last ball at Covent Garden. He had just returned from Vienna, and was full of *The Little Genius*. I wanted to get away, but he made me stay to sup with him, his amiable wife, his brother, and a party of friends.

He was the life and soul of the goodly company. I left him bright as sunshine, full of life and mirth and jollity, his jovial laughter ringing in my ears ; and now —alas, poor “Gus” !

“Death cometh not untimely to him who is fit to die,” but it came too soon to him : he had not even reached his half-century. “He should have died hereafter,” for success never turned his head, and to the last he was the same genial, kind-hearted, generous fellow he had been at the beginning.

At his decease Drury Lane was to let. His executors immediately secured the practical skill of Mr. Oscar Barrett for the pantomime, but they had nothing prepared for the dramatic season. Now I had a Drury

Lane drama ready, had saved a thousand for two, got some friends to help me with three or four thousand more, and took the theatre, confidently anticipating that the remainder of Harris's lease would be transferred to me for a consideration. I was met, however, with the reply that a gentleman had already obtained an option, but as there was not the most distant probability of his being able to comply with the conditions thereof, there could be no doubt that the lease would revert to me within forty-eight hours of the commencement of my campaign.

I had only a fortnight to get ready in. A Drury Lane drama nowadays requires six months' inception and three months' actual preparation, but I knew my play backwards, and resolved to chance it. I was especially fortunate in my company, and equally so in securing the co-operation of the old staff of the theatre—including an admirable scene-painter, a capital carpenter, an excellent property-man. Neil Forsyth (now manager of Covent Garden) took charge of the front of the house, Sydney Smith of the accounts, Arthur Collins came to my assistance in the stage management, while my old comrades, John Chute and Clarence Holt, made themselves useful in a thousand ways, and we started with a flowing sail.

Time was against us, but, like Philip of Spain, I have always taken for my motto "Time and me against every other two." We had to rehearse twice daily, and when the stage was occupied with the scenery at the Lane, we rehearsed in the saloon or at Covent Garden. We commenced at ten or eleven, knocked off at two,

when I provided a frugal but substantial lunch in the saloon for the company, at five coffee and cigarettes, at six rehearsal was resumed till eleven. We worked with such a will that we surmounted every difficulty, and upon our opening night the curtain rose punctually at half-past seven.

Those who were present on that occasion will not accuse me of exaggeration when I say that my reception left nothing to be desired on the ground of enthusiasm. When at the termination of my inaugural address I left the stage, exclaiming :

And, should your suffrages approve my reign,  
I'll make it worthy of Old Drury Lane !

the house "rose at me" and I felt elate and confident, assured my reign would be permanent ; but I had reckoned without a gentleman who stood smiling at my elbow while he drew aside the curtain to enable me to make my triumphal exit. When I learnt next day in the very journal which chronicled my triumph that that polite gentleman had redeemed his option and secured the reversion of Harris's lease, and that his name was Arthur Collins, I was a little flabbergasted !

But "All's fair in love and war," and he played the game straightly and fairly, and did his duty faithfully to me, as doubtless he will to his present colleagues, who are fortunate in having so capable a pilot at the helm—a pilot who has already solved their greatest difficulty by securing a potent unfailing attraction for the opera season, when the Lane must either remain closed, with the loss of a heavy rental, or be opened with some dubious attraction to a still greater loss.

If so pronounced a success has been achieved with the invertebrate, sprawling *Dante*, there can be no doubt as to the triumphs which await the new manager of Drury Lane, and the old one of the Lyceum, when they have succeeded in obtaining a drama worthy of the administrative ability of the one and the artistic genius of the other.

To return however, to my own short-lived triumph. As I have already said, the curtain rose to the moment, the play went without a hitch, and the curtain fell as the clock struck eleven on our opening night. This beats the record at Old Drury, where, for the past twenty years, the curtain has never fallen on a first night until twelve, and frequently half an hour later even than that.

My play (*The Duchess of Coolgardie*) was neither better nor worse than its precursors, but it lacked the magnificence and the superb sensational effects which the *habitués* of the Lane have become accustomed to. The fact was, I had neither the time nor the money to do what I desired, and although both press and public were unanimous in hyperfervid eulogia, the receipts were not up to my anticipations. We made no money, but we gained much reputation, and I had to console myself as best I could with the knowledge that I had even for a brief time held "sole sovereign sway and masterdom" over the theatre in which

A trembling boy, I crept up yonder chair  
To beard a kingly lion in his lair :

and I could at least say with Dryden,

E'en fall itself upon the past can have no power :  
What has been, has been, and I have had my hour.

During the time I was connected with mining and other City enterprises, my brother sent over from Tasmania particulars of a marble quarry and a copper mine. The expert's reports accompanying his own were of such a flattering nature that I was induced to advance a considerable sum to enable him to secure the leases, and to come over and personally conduct the floating of the undertakings. On his arrival in this country money had to be found from time to time, until my "little all" was sunk in the copper mine, and I became a partner in the concern. The leases had been taken out in my brother's name, and when the company was ultimately floated, unhappily I was obliged to go to law with my partner. I got into Chancery, was confined there for two years, obtained a verdict for £12,000, but did not get even a postage stamp out of it, in addition to which I was robbed of £1,500 in connection with the business, and saddled with a bill of costs awful to contemplate. Stranger still, my partner died at Sumatra the other day, and the property has again reverted to me !

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and I am not altogether without hope that "the summer of my life may prove fruitless beside the autumn."

## CHAPTER XL

### “*PERICLES*”

*Soggarth Aroon* at Birmingham—*Pericles* produced at the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon—The Cast—Miss Lilian Braithwaite—Mr. Arthur Hodgson—At Hopperton Hall—The Shakespeare Sermon—Clement Scott and his Remarks on the Play.

I HAVE recently produced and acted with success a new and original play of mine, entitled the *Soggarth Aroon*, in Birmingham, and my friend Kyrle Bellew is arranging for its production in America.

More remarkable still, during the *Henry V.* days Phelps urged me to turn my attention to Shakespeare's *Pericles*, alleging that he had made more coin and kudos by it than any of his famous productions at Sadler's Wells, and that of all parts it was the one most congenial to my resources.

I followed the master's advice—devoted years and years of loving care and study to it, and prepared with the aid of Moyr Smith, the eminent artist, a *mise en scène* of unsurpassable splendour. It has been twice on the eve of production at Drury Lane, but adverse circumstances persistently intervened, and I had abandoned all hope of its ever seeing the light, when lo ! to my amazement, during his recent management of the Lyceum Mr. Frank Benson (up to that moment a total stranger

to me) invited me—yes, actually invited me!—to produce the piece, and to enact the hero, during his memorial performances at the Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon. Thanks to Mr. Benson’s liberality, the loyal co-operation of his company, and, I may add, the enthusiastic support of the public, the result was successful beyond our most sanguine anticipations.

I have already said how much I was indebted to the zealous co-operation and the ability of my colleagues of the Lyceum for the success of this play, but the record would be incomplete were I to omit all mention of the fact that it was Miss Lilian Braithwaite who came at a moment’s notice to the rescue as Marina, and acquitted herself so well that she has gone on advancing step by step and has never looked back since ; that Miss Lily Brayton, who had previously distinguished herself as the Queen in Mr. Benson’s admirable *Richard II.* at the Lyceum, and who is now appearing in the same character in Mr. Tree’s superb production at His Majesty’s, was the most charming of Thaisas, while Miss Price, who appeared as Fair Dian of the Silver Bow, afforded abundant proof of the promise which has since enabled her to make her mark in *Calypso* and *Letty*. Mr. Oscar Asche and Miss Weatherall made impressive pictures and stood out in bold relief as Cleon and his wicked wife ; Mr. Thalberg made a spirited Lysimachus ; while the gentlemen who played the minor characters—and some even of the speechless nobles—now occupy responsible positions ; but this is nothing unusual in the Benson company, which is indeed one of the few schools for the *actor’s art* we have still left.

Circumstances occurred in connection with this production of so remarkable a character, that I trust I may be pardoned if I relate them.

We had only ten days in which to produce this work ; our rehearsals, except the final one with scenery, music, and properties, took place at the Lyceum.

I had made so elaborate a study of the play that the entire dramatic action had been carefully arranged before we commenced, hence our rehearsals went like clockwork. We had finished our last rehearsal in town on Thursday night, and were to set off to Stratford on Saturday morning, to finish up, when lo ! to my horror and Benson's, Miss Edith Jordan, who was to have played my daughter Marina, was stricken down with an alarming attack of influenza ! Had it been one of the standard plays, there would have been no difficulty in providing a substitute, but for *Pericles* it appeared impossible. Lilian Braithwaite was, however, bold enough to attempt it.

At first I refused to encounter the responsibility, but she was so modest and so ingratiating, so positive in her promise to be perfect in the text, that I yielded to her solicitations and to Benson's earnest desire—more especially when he showed me a telegram conveying the assurance that the entire house had been secured by the Leicester Shakespeare Society, who were coming to Stratford to see the play.

I devoted the whole of Friday night to the lady at the Lyceum. Next morning I escorted her to Stratford. Incongruous as it may appear in connection with the Bard, my friend John Hollingshead accompanied me to



witness the performance. I devoted the whole of the journey to going through the lady's scenes, when, phenomenal as it may appear, she was almost letter-perfect in the text.

On arriving at Stratford I found my friend Mr. Arthur Hodgson (since, alas! dead) awaiting with an invitation to lunch the following day at the Shakespeare Hotel.

This was by no means my only agreeable experience of the Bard's birthplace.

Clement Scott had just returned from America and came down to see *Pericles*. The theatre was so crowded that he had difficulty in obtaining a seat.

I was due on Sunday to lunch at Hopperton Hall with the Hodgsons, and arranged for Scott to accompany me.

Sir Frederick ceded us the Hopperton pew in Shakespeare Church, and we went to hear Dean Farrar preach the Shakespeare sermon, at the end of which the vicar (Dr. Arbuthnot) took us round to the Dean, who had been to the theatre the night previous to see *Pericles*. I dare not trust myself to repeat the civil things these two distinguished divines said about the play, but since I am not without hope that it may yet be produced in town and in America, I trust I may be pardoned if I quote a few lines from what Clement Scott said of the play and the players in *The Daily Chronicle* :—

“John Coleman has done his work admirably, and I maintain that if he has given us one breath of the divine spirit of Shakespeare of which Dean Farrar spoke so eloquently in the pulpit the next day; if he has shown us woman in her transcendent purity; if he has preserved

*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, as a stage play for all time, then John Coleman will not have laboured in vain, and his artistic mission at Stratford will not be passed over slightly or disregarded in the future.

"The Shakespearian Marina is the origin of the heroines of the catacombs in Rome, be they invented or reproduced by Cardinal Wiseman, Wilson Barrett, or the authors Russian, Polish, English, or American of a *Fabiola*, a *Callista*, a *Sign of the Cross*, a *Ben Hur*, or a *Quo Vadis*? The religious play has its essential element in the war between purity and sensuality. That is the essence of *Pericles*; that is the essence that John Coleman has so deftly and faithfully preserved.

"The production of such a work filled me with wonder. This play, little known to any living playgoer, has attracted vast audiences by the force of its parable, by the interest of its story, the beauty of its decoration, and the uniform excellence of the artists. If they can do it so well at Stratford-on-Avon, what would not an Arthur Collins or a George Edwardes do with it in London? I think the Londoners would feast their eyes on Thaisa and Marina, and grow enthusiastic over the Temple of Belus, the Banquet, the Ship Scene, the Burial of Thaisa at sea; the resuscitation; the orgy; the incremation of the supposed Marina; and the apparition of the Goddess in the Temple of Artemis. The acting delighted me. I wish some of the young actors with no experience and convenient trousers pockets could have seen John Coleman in *Pericles*; they would have learnt what 'power and style' mean."

As I am now reaching the end of my story, I will take this opportunity of contrasting the drama of yesterday with the drama of to-day.

The up-to-date manager is wise in his generation. He knows that the many-headed multitude wants to

be amused, and objects to be bored. He knows, too, "'tis money makes the mare to go"; hence (small blame to him!) he begins by securing his syndicate to ensure "the sinews of war," pay him a handsome salary and a liberal commission for the use of his name.

He provides his private secretary, his typewriter, and his telephone, his "Literary Adviser," his author, his poet, his composer and stage manager (sometimes two or three of 'em), his "acting manager" and his "business manager."

The divided duties of these august functionaries I am unable to define with accuracy, but infer that they are of an exalted character, inasmuch as they figure conspicuously among such portentous announcements as the following: "Sole Proprietor, Mr. Brown; Licensee, Mr. Jones; Lessee, Mr. Robertson; Manager, Mr. Gayrick Keene, who presents the famous comedienne Miss Polly Perkins in *A Night of Pleasure*."

"(A word 'to the maiden of bashful fifteen.' If you can't bring your mother, bring your aunt. If you can't bring either, try cousin Belinda's best young man.)

"Acting Manager for Mr. Gayrick Keene, Mr. Allthere. Business Manager for Miss Polly Perkins, Mr. Stickphast."

West End management is like gambling on the Stock Exchange: to-day you can't keep the people out, even were you to erect barriers for the purpose; to-morrow, with the aid of "All the Talents," you can't drag 'em in, even with free admissions!

In two small theatres two admirable performances have recently run right off the reel respectively for

two and three years ! Yet within a stone's throw of these very buildings I have seen a performance given to a house of nine shillings and sixpence, while at another and more fashionable house, in the same locality, I have seen a comedy by a distinguished author acted by an excellent company to a handful of deadheads, without one single shilling having been paid at the doors !

Syndicates were undreamt of when I commenced management ; hence my small capital was earned out of my blood and bones and brains.

The entire arrangements of my theatres were organised by my head and controlled by my hands. The day was occupied (unless when travelling) thus : Up at seven ; at eight, morning's post, reading, and answering letters ; breakfast at nine ; at ten, consultation with prompter, scene painter, carpenter, and property man for arrangement of scenery and properties for night's performance ; at eleven, rehearsal ; (in prosperous times) a drive or a gallop for an hour ; at three, dinner ; at four, *The Times* and a snooze ; at five, a cup of tea ; at six, theatre, to act twice or thrice during the week (or every night, if necessary !) ; home at eleven—a light supper ; from twelve to two, study—study—words—words ! Then to bed ; a novel for half an hour ; read oneself to sleep ; and “ shut up in measureless content ! ”

This was the routine day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. 'Twas thus that to our repertory of standard works we were enabled to add every new piece of every description, until indeed we might have been fairly described as Polonius described the Danish Players.

The London managers were not half so hardly worked as we were, yet they worked hard enough, as witness the remarkable repertory of the Haymarket, the Princess’s, and Sadler’s Wells of the period.

Even later it is curious to note the nightly changes at Drury Lane during the reign of Falconer and Chatterton, and contrast them with the present *régime* !

Doubtless this arrangement saves time and study and rehearsals, gas, electric light, scenery, painters, property men, and carpenters ; it also enables the management to dispense with actors, but it is death to the actor’s art.

My repertory comprised the whole of the Shakesperian acting plays, besides which we did *Virginus*, *William Tell*, *The Stranger*, *Jane Shore*, *Pizarro*, *Lady of Lyons*, and *Richelieu* ; certain standard comedies—viz. *School for Scandal*, *Belle’s Stratagem*, *Money*, *Still Waters Run Deep*, etc. ; certain dramas—*Green Bushes*, *Flowers of the Forest*, *Ticket-of-Leave-Man*, *The Colleen Bawn*, *The Octoroon*, *Arrah na Pogue*, *The Shaughraun*, *East Lynne*, *Black-Eyed Susan* and *Two Orphans*, *Rob Roy*, *Guy Mannering* (with the music), and even the burlesques of *Ixion*, *Paris*, and *Kenilworth*, and upwards of thirty farces. Then there were my own especial dramas—viz. *Katharine Howard*, *Ruy Blas*, *Valjean*, *Never too Late to Mend*, *Foul Play*, *Don César*, *The King’s Musketeers*, *Courier of Lyons*, *Corsican Brothers*, *Monte Cristo*, and *The Dead Heart*.

Every one of these works could be done with one rehearsal, and many of them could be done with propriety without a rehearsal at all !

Now I am bold to aver, without fear of contradiction, there is no theatre in London at the present moment capable of producing any single one of those pieces at a moment's notice !

I do not impugn the ability of the actors of to-day. From circumstances beyond their control—circumstances which (since I, more than any living man, helped to bring about) I now deeply deplore—the aspirants of to-day have been debarred the training which is absolutely essential to the making of actors.

“There are, however, as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it,” if we are fortunate enough to catch them ; and if we can only induce the legislature to found and endow a national theatre, a race of great actors will assuredly arise capable of illustrating the great works of the great masters, as well as the modern ideas of great modern dramatists.

This project is so near to my heart that I have ventured to reproduce in the next chapter (with some omissions) an article of mine that appeared some time ago in the pages of *The Nineteenth Century*.

## CHAPTER XLI

### *THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE*

Macready's Influence on the British Stage—Samuel Phelps—Macready's Project for a National Theatre—Phelps's Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet—E. L. Blanchard, Donald King, and David Garrick's Widow—The Théâtre Français—The Education of the Actor under the Old *Régime*—Chatterton's Management of Drury Lane—Suggestions for a National Theatre.

WHEN the illustrious William Charles Macready, who so long, so ably, and so nobly maintained the dignity of the British stage, had succeeded with the aid of his friend, Edward Lytton Bulwer, in emancipating the poetic drama from its shameful bondage, a bondage which restricted its very existence in the metropolis to the two patent houses (Drury Lane and Covent Garden), he threw open the doors of the minor theatres to receive the precious gift.

With this last boon to the art of which he was the most distinguished ornament, he retired from public life, bequeathing, like another Alexander, his crown and sceptre to the "most worthy" among his followers. The choice unanimously fell on Samuel Phelps.

It was at the historic farewell dinner to Macready in the Hall of Commerce that he referred to Phelps, and nominated him as his successor.

How wisely and how well that admirable actor and enterprising manager fulfilled his trust the annals of Sadler's Wells Theatre for eighteen memorable years remain to attest.

I had the honour of being on terms of friendly intimacy with Mr. Phelps for many years; hence, when Salvini, the Italian actor, left me in the lurch, my old friend came to the rescue, in order to give *éclat* to my *début*.

During our prolonged intimacy Phelps confided to me that Macready had bequeathed to him another legacy—viz. a project for a National Theatre on the basis of the Théâtre Français. Year in, year out, for hours and hours together, we built our theatre over and over again, endowed it, and managed it, “in the air.”

Now it so happened that during his engagement with me the Lord Mayor (Sir Edward Cotton) gave a banquet at the Mansion House to the representatives of literature and art, and Phelps and I were among the invited guests.

Besides being a martyr to *mauvaise honte*, Phelps had a morbid horror of even appearing to exploit himself, and he positively loathed the ignoble artifices of the “showman.” Apart from this, he was so petted and spoiled and coddled at home that society had few charms and no attractions for him. Hence he declined to accept the Lord Mayor's invitation, and it was only when I urged upon him that the position he occupied involved duties and responsibilities beyond its mere barren honours, and that he was bound to carry out the mission bequeathed him by Macready, that he at length yielded to my persuasions and consented to accompany me.



On this occasion his health was proposed by the Lord Mayor, in connection with the Shakespearian drama. His reply was of so remarkable a character that I transcribe it here in full :—

“I can say very little to you about the Shakespearian drama, beyond what I dare say the greater portion of you already know. But my object in speaking to you to-night is for a very different purpose.

“The Lord Mayor has spoken much of the educational power of the drama. You will forgive me if I speak of myself more than good taste would suggest. If I do so, it is only as exemplifying what is to come after.

“Some years ago I took an obscure theatre in the north of London called Sadler’s Wells, and nearly the whole of my brethren in the profession, and many out of it, said it would not last a fortnight. It lasted eighteen years, and my stock-in-trade chiefly consisted of the plays of Shakespeare. Now, I determined to act, if possible, the whole of Shakespeare’s plays. I acted thirty-one of all sorts, ‘from aged Lear to youthful Pericles,’ and the thought begotten in my mind latterly was, that if that theatre could be made to pay, as I did make it pay, not making a fortune certainly, but bringing up a large family and paying my way—well, ladies and gentlemen, I thought if I could do that for eighteen years, why could it not be done again? But, mark you, I found that about every five or six years I had fresh audiences, that plays would bear repeating again and again, and by a peculiar economic method of my own I was enabled to repeat them without any

very great expense. Well, if that could be done by me as a humble individual, why could it not be done by the Government of this country? Why could not a subsidised theatre, upon a moderate scale of expense, be added to the late educational scheme by which children are forced somehow or other into school?

"I maintain, from the experience of eighteen years, that the perpetual iteration of Shakespeare's words, if nothing more, going on daily for so many months in the year, must and would produce a great effect upon the public mind. Moreover, I have at this moment in my possession hundreds of letters from men of all sorts and conditions, who came to see me at Sadler's Wells as boys, and who have written to me as men, to say that they received their first glimpse of education at that theatre. They have gone on improving in the world, doing this, and that, and the other, which I cannot tell, as I have not time, but I have those letters in my house in proof of what I say.

"If I could find any member of Parliament who would take the matter up (which I fear is hopeless), I would willingly devote what little of life remains to me, to point out the way in which this could be done, and I would willingly give evidence in the House of Commons to prove the truth of Shakespeare's educating powers.

"I merely throw my bread upon the waters; it may float away and disappear for ever, but I throw out the hint in the earnest hope that it may gather strength, and that it may come back after many days."

When these words were spoken there sat in our immediate vicinity Alfred and Mrs. Wigan, Mrs. Keeley,

Jenny Lind, Mrs. Coleman, Caroline Heath, Amy Sedgwick, Sir Robert Carden, Benjamin Webster, John Baldwin Buckstone, Frederick B. Chatterton, Walter Lacy, Henry Howe, Tom Robertson, H. J. Byron, George Augustus Sala, W. G. Wills, and H. L. Bateman, 'The Colonel.'

All were elate and jubilant then, but now—alas!

As an appropriate introduction to what I am about to suggest I venture to quote an anecdote related by my friend the late E. L. Blanchard:—

"Many years ago," said he, "on the occasion of one of the annual banquets given by the Urban Club in commemoration of Shakespeare's birthday, just as we were breaking up, Donald King, the vocalist, said to me:

"Ned, I've something to give you. When I was a little chap I belonged to the choir of the Chapel Royal, and lived with my master on Adelphi Terrace, next to Garrick's house. Every morning I used to meet a tall handsome old lady, with an abundance of beautiful white hair and great dark eyes, taking her "constitutional" on the terrace. She was always quaintly but elegantly attired in black silk, and always carried a long malacca cane.

"In those days boys were taught to be respectful to their elders. I always doffed my cap to the lady, and she always responded with a nod or a gracious smile, but never spoke till one fine April morning, when she stopped me and said, in a soft sweet voice with rather a foreign accent:

"Little boy, do you know what day this is?"

"No, madam," I replied.

““It is Shakespeare's birthday and mine. I am seventy to-day. Take my hand, and, when you are my age, clasp the hand of your dearest friend and say you have shaken hands with an old lady who shook hands with Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and David Garrick, for I am David Garrick's widow, little boy.”

““There you are, Ned. Tip us your fist, old man, and shake, and when you get to my age pass it on to the next.””

Blanchard passed it on to me.

In like manner Macready passed on his long-cherished project to Phelps, and Phelps to me ; hence I claim a right to be heard on the subject of a National Theatre for the cultivation—nay, the actual preservation—of the national drama.

In France, the Théâtre Français is regarded as the absolute standard of purity in the pronunciation of the French language ; but this language of ours, which bids fair to be the language of the world, has no authorised standard, the art of elocution being scandalously neglected even at the Bar, the pulpit, and the Senate.

Formerly the actors were regarded as the supreme authorities on this subject. Sheridan, the father of Richard Brinsley, and the author of the Dictionary, was an actor, ; Walker, (another actor), the author of the Pronouncing Dictionary repeatedly quotes Garrick as an authority, and Laurence Sterne did not disdain to do so.

Leaving, however, this question aside, there can be

no manner of doubt that the actual art of expressing the highest form of human emotion has steadily deteriorated, and is daily deteriorating, on the British stage, simply because the actors of to-day, through circumstances beyond their control, are not only condemned to a degraded form of art (if art it be!), but are absolutely debarred the possibilities of improvement—partly because there is no longer a school, and partly because of the prolonged run of pieces, which makes practice, variety, and, as a natural consequence, versatility impossible.

Formerly, in all the great provincial centres, there were important theatres, veritable academies with “stock” companies, engaged usually for nine months in the year, in which the rising generation of actors graduated, under experienced managers and accomplished stage managers, in the great works of the great masters, and the best examples of the modern school. The curriculum was extensive, the conditions exacting, onerous, and laborious. Four and even as many as six hours were daily devoted to study, four at least to rehearsals, and five to the nightly performance. Observe, fifteen hours out of the twenty-four daily devoted to the pursuit of perfection; and contrast the past with the conditions which obtain in the present.

When I was manager of Drury Lane Theatre, I desired to give a play in which I had an interest, a trial trip for a couple of nights.

The drama then being enacted had been *actually* running for twelve consecutive weeks, during which the company had not been called upon for a single

rehearsal ; yet, when requested to assist in the new play, they rebelled, and had it not been for the courtesy of Sir Henry Irving, who lent us one of his best comedians, the play could not have been done at all. When my Drury Lane play was sent into the provinces, the troupe raised objections to giving even one rehearsal a week for the instruction of the local auxiliaries.

When the "schools" were in existence, discipline was inflexibly maintained, and any attempt at insubordination would have been met with immediate dismissal. The managers, usually men of culture and ripe experience, ruled with a rod of iron. The indolent and inept were speedily sent packing, the fittest alone survived, thrived, became actors, and when they ultimately reached their "Mecca" they were duly qualified, perfect in the text and the "business" of all the standard works, ready, and even anxious, to spring upon the stage and play them with a single rehearsal. Edmund Kean had only one rehearsal for Shylock on his memorable *début* at Drury Lane, Phelps had only one rehearsal for the same part when he opened at the Haymarket.

Sir Joshua was right when he maintained that "excellence was never granted to man except as the reward of labour," and Macready was also right when, in the fruitless effort to keep a wilful schoolboy (myself) from going on the stage, he wrote, "If you desire to gain any the least degree of eminence, you must learn to scorn delights and live laborious days."

The past system was by no means perfect, but it had certain advantages which the present system does not possess. For example, when the comedian of a

former generation had served his apprenticeship in the "smalls" he was promoted to the large cities of the provinces, where he was engaged all the year round in the study of the great masters, in the interpretation of whose works he was frequently brought in contact with the distinguished actors of the day during their periodical visits to the provinces.

When he had passed this exacting ideal, he was then, and not till then, deemed eligible for the great London theatres, where he was invariably engaged for a term of years at an annually increasing salary ; whereas now, when he has acquired a smattering of accomplishments, he is engaged for the "run of the piece," which, if fortunate, may last for a season, if unfortunate, for a fortnight ; or worse still, in the event of a failure, after giving a month's gratuitous services for rehearsals, he may find himself left high and dry and destitute at a week's or even a moment's notice.

Under the old *régime* so deplorable a result could scarcely have occurred. An actor engaged at Drury Lane or Covent Garden was settled for life, and the same might almost have been said of the Princess's under Charles Kean, Sadler's Wells under Phelps, the Adelphi under Webster, and the Haymarket under Buckstone : while the all-round excellence of the productions at the Prince of Wales's and the Haymarket under the Bancrofts, at the Lyceum under Irving, and the wonderful record at the Gaiety under Hollingshead, could only have been achieved by the welding together of a compact, homogeneous body of artists who had all learned their business.

With the exception of an occasional relapse into the sensational, Covent Garden and Drury Lane were wont to be devoted to the higher drama in all its infinite variety ; but alas ! Covent Garden has been turned into an Italian opera-house with intervals for masquerade balls ; while at Drury Lane the national drama has ceased to exist since the retirement of Chatterton, twenty-two years ago. This unfortunate but enterprising man surrounded himself with the best company of artists then in existence, led by Phelps, James Anderson, Barry Sullivan, Charles Dillon, Henry Irving, Walter Lacy, Mrs. Hermann Vezin, Margaret Kendal, and Helen Faucit, who devoted themselves to the drama of the greatest living and dead authors ; and although in the heat of the *Formosa* controversy Chatterton was indiscreet enough (an indiscretion bitterly repented and bitterly paid for !) to endorse Boucicault's cynical epigram—that "Shakespeare spelt ruin, and Byron bankruptcy"—the fact remains that he (Chatterton), who actually commenced business on borrowed capital (for which he had to pay twenty and even a hundred per cent.), during *his* management paid £80,000 in rent, expended an enormous sum on dilapidations, alterations, and decorations, maintained a numerous and expensive company, and never owed his artists a shilling ; and when his "Waterloo" came, he fell, not through the National Theatre or the national drama, but through unfortunate and disastrous speculations elsewhere.

To his credit it must be recorded that during his sixteen-years' reign his actors were engaged for a season of nine months in every year, while the dramatic season



at Drury Lane is now restricted to a third of that time.

Nowadays, it is not infrequently announced that Mr. Brown, Jones, or Robinson will appear for the first time (not for the first time in London, but for the first time on any stage) in one of those masterpieces to which the actors of the past devoted years, long years of study. These great men graduated in the country before they presumed to challenge the suffrages of the metropolis.

Garrick failed in Aboan (a secondary part in *Oronooko*) at Ipswich, began again, and came to Goodman's Fields to take the town by storm in that remote and unfashionable locality; Kemble failed at York and elsewhere, before he became the Hamlet and Coriolanus of the age. His brother Charles, when serving his apprenticeship with the elder Macready in Sheffield, was stigmatised as a "stick," tried back, again, and yet again, till the world acknowledged him as *the* Faulconbridge, Marc Antony, Mercutio, and Benedick beyond compare.

Even the matchless Siddons, upon her first appearance in town, failed, and was banished to Bath, but returned to be the crowning glory of the British stage. Edmund Kean, who came, before he was ripe, to the Haymarket, failed utterly in the part of a flunkey, went back to learn his business in the country, and returned with ripened experience to carry everything before him at Drury Lane.

His son Charles told me himself that he too failed on his first appearance as Young Norval at Drury Lane, but "out of the nettle danger he plucked the rose safety," and after a long provincial probation returned

to triumph over all obstacles in the very theatre in which he had so ignominiously failed.

Phelps was years and years studying in the country before he arrived in London ; and, to come to more recent time, Irving has himself told the pathetic story of the failure which his indomitable pluck enabled him to surmount ; while Mrs. Kendal, who has never failed in *anything* (at least not in anything I have seen her attempt), learnt her business thoroughly in the country before she came, and came to stay, in town. These historic incidents are cited to show—in point of fact, to prove—that since the academies have ceased to exist in the country it is necessary to provide one in town.

The learned Bruin's sententious dogma—

The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,  
And they who live to please must please to live—

is as true now as it was when written a hundred and twenty years ago. But let us examine how it applies to contemporaneous "art."

In Central London there are five-and-twenty theatres, good, bad, and indifferent. Nine of the best are devoted to musical buffooneries, eight to comedy, three to drama, and four to farce.

They so-called "musical comedies" serve to beguile an idle hour for a pretty numerous *clientèle* of after-dinner folk, especially very young gentlemen with high shirt collars and low foreheads—one is almost tempted to say "foreheads vacant of our glorious gains." To these worthy people, music reminiscent of the "Halls," pretty forms and faces, pretty dancers and pretty dresses

(not too much), combined with "wheezes" which were ancient when the last century was young, despite their fatuous imbecility and abnormal dulness, appeal with an irresistible fascination. In the majority of instances, the author (save the mark!) reminds us of Canning's needy knife-grinder: "Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!" But what does that signify, so long as it provides the after-dinner brigade with an opportunity of taking "forty winks," and when they are awake saves them the trouble of thinking, since in these troublous times that is something to be thankful for.

The comedy theatres—when they keep to the clean and wholesome—afford opportunities for excellent acting which is always entertaining and sometimes interesting. The farcical theatres sometimes bore, but they sometimes amuse, and laughter is not critical.

Drury Lane and the Princess's (happily spared the degradation of being converted into a dime museum) are in full blast with popular melodrama of the ultra-sensational type, and the Lyceum, to which Irving devoted the best years of an arduous life, has gone one better with the eccentricities of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Conan Doyle's famous detective, under the auspices of Mr. William Gillette, an American author and actor of high repute and distinguished ability.

Last, but not least, Mr. Tree, who has earned golden opinions by his renditions of *King John*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and, above all, by his artistic and magnificent production of *Richard II.* and Mr. Phillips's noble play of *Herod*, has returned to his *premières amours*, and is now disporting himself in *The*

*Darling of the Gods*, so that at the present moment, in all this vast city, with its enormous population and its plethora of theatres, there is no single one permanently devoted to our national drama.

Now there is not a nation of Continental Europe which has not built and endowed its National Theatre. In France (besides £44,000 per annum granted to the Grand Opera and the Opéra Comique) substantial and indeed large subsidies are granted to the National Theatre (Théâtre Français) and the Odéon, etc. ; Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Brussels are largely subsidised, partly by the State and partly by the reigning Sovereign. The city of Geneva has not only provided and erected the National Theatre at a cost of £150,000, but allows the management £7,500 per annum. The Saxe-Meiningen Theatre (whose Shakespearian performances are famous throughout the world) is presided over and liberally endowed by the reigning Duke (a relation of our own Royal Family), and the theatre at Weimar (so long famous from its association with the illustrious Goethe) has been subventioned for the past century. Scores of smaller theatres in France and Germany are also liberally endowed. For instance, in Lyons, Bordeaux, and Toulon the municipalities in each town grant a subsidy of £9,000 a year to the manager, while even in Angoulême and Poitiers, with only 35,000 inhabitants each, substantial subsidies are granted.

In Breslau, a German town with a population of barely 100,000, the municipality have provided a splendid theatre, and subvention it with £10,000 per annum.

While investigating these figures it has reached my

knowledge that on June 27th, 1898, a petition signed not only by all the eminent professors of music in this country, but by many social celebrities, including various distinguished authors and actors, was presented to the London County Council, proposing that a municipal opera-house should be erected and endowed at the public expense "for the purpose of bringing the highest class of music within reach of the mass of the people."

This petition, however, omits to mention the following facts :—

(1) There are already two important musical institutions—viz. the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music—handsomely endowed by Act of Parliament, assisted by private munificence and provided with a liberally paid staff, and offices rent-free, etc., for the purpose proposed by the petition.

(2) The Guildhall School of Music, with offices and schoolrooms rent-free, besides which all working expenses are guaranteed by the Corporation, who have also built a theatre for the free use of pupils, at a cost of £22,000. Nay, more, the Lords Committee of Council on Education so far back as November 26th, 1898, authorised the Technical Education Board to include in their curriculum "music, singing and musical notation, instrumental and orchestral music."

(3) Besides these three institutions, there are the Musical Association, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, and a dozen or more similar institutions devoted to high-class music, notably the Philharmonic Society for eighty-seven years, the Monday and Saturday "Pops" for forty-one years ; besides which the Crystal

Palace, with Sir August Manns's famous band, his superb oratorios, and his matchless Handel Festivals, has made the masses familiar with the highest class of music for upwards of half a century.

There are hundreds of classic concerts every season, while the St. James's and the new Queen's Hall have earned a very high reputation for the very best work of the kind attainable. Then there are the choirs of the Chapel Royal, the Savoy, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Catholic cathedrals, and no less than eighty-four choral societies in London and the suburbs.

(4) The Albert Hall for over thirty years has been devoted exclusively to high-class music, and the Imperial Institute has been more or less devoted to the same object.

(5) The Savoy Theatre was the permanent home for opera of a high class, and for upwards of twenty years successfully supplied this want.

(6) There are three grand opera companies—the Carl Rosa, the Moody-Manners, and the Turner combination ; and there are upwards of a score of opera bouffé and musical comedy companies performing in London or the provinces all the year round.

(7) There are no less than nine fashionable theatres in Central London devoted exclusively to musical performances.

(8) Three of the most magnificent variety theatres in the world—viz., the Palace, the Empire, and the Alhambra (to say nothing of the Oxford, the Pavilion, the Tivoli, the Canterbury, and a score of other places of a similar character)—are all devoted to musical entertainments.

(9) The Empire Syndicate with its capital of £1,400,000 is almost entirely devoted to the erection of magnificent musical variety theatres in suburban London and the provinces.

(10) The Italian Opera, Covent Garden, confines itself exclusively to high-class music, and is supported by a large annual subsidy provided by private subscription.

If these statistics are reliable it would seem apparent that "the mass of the people" have already ample opportunity for becoming familiar with "the highest class of music."

Amongst the signatures to the petition may be found the names of many eminent members of the dramatic profession, but amidst the numerous subsidies and endowments referred to, the very name of the drama is conspicuous by its absence; although, in the particular form of art advocated by the petitioners, music and drama are not only absolutely indissoluble, but drama actually comes first, inasmuch as without drama opera cannot exist.

Strange to say, it has escaped the sagacious promoters of this scheme that their opera-house is already built and endowed to their hands. Fifty thousand pounds would transform that ghastly failure the Albert Hall, or that colossal white elephant the Imperial Institute (both rotting away unused), into one of the finest opera houses in the world. Enough of opera-houses. Let us now take a glimpse of the theatres.

A quarter of a century ago the metropolitan theatres were a disgrace to the metropolis. Many of them

remain so still—squalid, ugly, stifling dust-holes, which are a never-ceasing peril to the lives of actors and auditors, and to the property of their neighbours. There is not a theatre in the suburbs which does not put to shame these relics of a barbarous past. Were fire to break out during a performance at any one of these places, an incalculable loss of life and property would inevitably ensue.

Next to the existence of these death traps, the most amazing thing is that they ever came to be licensed. In the public interest they should be closed at once—with, of course, reasonable compensation to the owners and occupiers.

The era of reformation set in twenty years ago, and has continued steadily ever since. Many of our theatres are now both elegant and commodious, but there is still room for considerable improvement, and the theatre of the future, the National Theatre, has yet to be built. Externally, it should be an ornament to the metropolis. Internally, it should not only be beautiful, but it should be supplied with everything which improvement up to date can suggest for elegance and convenience. It should, of course, be built of fireproof material, and should be constructed to seat 2,500 auditors, who should be enabled to see every inch of the stage and to hear every word spoken. The seats should be numbered and comfortably upholstered.

There should be ample means of entrance and exit, a lofty and commodious vestibule leading to a grand foyer adorned with statues and pictures of the celebrities of the stage, commencing with the master himself. The



actors, at present too frequently relegated to rabbit-hutches and packing-cases beneath the stage, should be provided with spacious dressing-rooms, supplied with mirrors, gas and electric light, hot and cold water, baths and lavatories. The managerial staff should have offices before and behind the scenes. There should be a large room for rehearsals, or, preferably, a small theatre, such as Charles Mathews used to give his entertainment in at Her Majesty's, or such as formerly existed at the Theatre Royal, Dublin ; a library, a room for the ballet to practise in, another for the chorus, a third for the drilling of the "supers" ; green-rooms, a large painting-room, large wardrobe-room, spacious workshops for carpenters and property men.

There should be at least three complete stages, fully equipped with every modern scenic appliance. The stages and machinery should all be worked by hydraulic power, which would also ventilate the house, heating it in winter and cooling it in summer. At Penarth there is a hydraulic hoist which lifts fifteen tons of coal aboard a vessel in one minute. If a motive power like this could be applied to the three stages proposed, marvels of scenic effect could be achieved at the maximum of speed and the minimum of cost.

Scores of competent artists can be secured at reasonable salaries by guaranteeing engagements for a season of nine months, with option to terminate or renew for a term of years, subject to certain conditions. The old stock must be leavened with a copious infusion of new, young, and ambitious aspirants, destined under competent tuition to form the actors of the future.

There should be an elementary college, to which no one should be admitted who has not already passed the usual scholastic standard, and who is not proficient in fencing, dancing, and calisthenics. The candidate, having passed a satisfactory examination, would then be eligible for training in elocution, pantomime, stage deportment, etc., and would start immediately at the lowest rung of the ladder.

At least six months previous to the opening, the manager should begin to arrange his repertory, and should have at least six standard works ready, text, scenery, costumes, and properties complete in every department, before he commences his season.

The building will cost £150,000, the site £50,000 more, in all £200,000. The authorities can get any amount of money at 3 per cent. or less—hence the rental should not exceed £6,000 per annum; and a subsidy, to guarantee working expenses, must be made of not less than £15,000 a year.

A penny in the pound on ratable property in London produces annually £150,411. If the subsidy (like the bands in the parks) has to come out of the rates, it may be roughly estimated that (subject to correction) a rate of a fifth of a penny would more than provide for this outlay; while as a *quid pro quo* the authorities should be entitled yearly to draw £30,000 worth of tickets for distribution among students of the academies, pupils of the schools, post-office and telegraph clerks, soldiers, commissionaires, police and other public officials, with the privilege of admittance to the theatre at periods to be agreed upon.

The establishment of a National Theatre in London would not only be a source of delight, but, like the National Gallery, the British and South Kensington Museums, it would form a most potent propaganda of culture. The need is imperative, and what every city on the Continent of Europe has done, surely the greatest city in the world can do and ought to do, and more,

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly.

If our national drama is to be preserved as a living force to elevate, ennoble, and instruct the rising generations and generations yet to come, now is the time to erect a monument to the genius of our greatest poet, and consecrate it to his memory and the use of the nation—henceforth, and for ever.

This memorial should be erected in the heart of Central London. I can lay my finger on the spot. It should be a building for England to be proud of, for other nations to envy, and when that much-talked-of New Zealander arrives at last, instead of contemplating the ruins of St. Paul's with sadness, he will gaze with rapture on the shrine of Shakespeare, while he exclaims, "They taught me at school that this was a dying nation! The fools lied! It is a nation endowed with perpetual youth!"

With the legacy which Macready bequeathed to Phelps, and Phelps to me, this chapter commenced, and with it it shall end. Four and twenty years have elapsed since those memorable words were spoken at the Mansion House by Phelps.

Alas! They fell on deaf ears, and the bread which he cast upon the waters has not yet come back: no member of Parliament has responded to that pathetic appeal, and the House of Commons still remains mute and unmindful of this momentous subject. Yet, only think! A fourth—merely one-fourth—of the sum expended in *one* single week upon the operations in South Africa, and mark!—not in one week only, but in every week out of 106; or—shall we change the venue?—leave South Africa to Milner and Kitchener, and point out that the amount recklessly squandered on the unfortunate *Cobra*, doomed to go down during her first short voyage, carrying death and destruction with her, would have endowed our children and our children's children with “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.”

Perhaps when Home Rule is carried, the Land Question disposed of, the House of Lords abolished, the Church disestablished, the Eastern Question settled, the Commons will begin to think about the necessity of providing a home for the national drama.

But we can't afford to wait for these eventualities; hence, from the dilatory, inartistic, and unsympathetic Commons I turn to the men who are endeavouring to make London what she ought to be.

In the name of my dead masters and comrades, in the name of my living brothers and sisters, in the name of the beautiful and beloved art to which we have devoted the best years of our lives—I appeal to you, O conscript fathers of the County Council, to remember the noble saying of the wise Greeks, “Take care of the beautiful—the useful will take care of itself.” Crown

the great work you have already done, by the greater work you yet will do, and signalise the new century by building a palatial People's Theatre for the people—a people's theatre, at people's prices—prices within the reach of all—a theatre which shall correspond in England to the House of Molière in France, a theatre devoted to the national drama (by which I do not mean merely the drama of the dead, but the best of the old and the best of the new!), where plays could be acted for a run of a week or a month, or even two or three months, so that in the fulness of time we might have consecutive performances of the historical plays of Shakespeare, given as they are given at Berlin and elsewhere; and doubtless when Irving, and Barrett, and Tree have retired into the blest retreats of private life, they will bequeath *Becket*, *Charles the First*, *Claudian*, and *Herod*—scenery, costumes, and music included—to the national repertory, as an heirloom to the nation, and thus help to place the National Theatre on a solid foundation. The demand for such an institution is more imperative now than it ever was, inasmuch as the centralising system has utterly destroyed the great provincial circuits, which were formerly training schools for the actor's art, an art which in its higher form of development not only threatens to become extinct, but which will most assuredly perish unless prompt measures be taken for its preservation.

But how is it to be preserved?

For lack of some one better qualified, in the language of Phelps I reply, "I will willingly devote what little of life remains to me to point out the way in which it can be done!"

Surely a project of such national importance, not only from its satisfying an artistic want, but considered as a mere educational medium, to maintain at its highest standard of purity and perfection the language which Shakespeare taught, and Milton wrote, is well worth the attention of the sympathetic municipal government which is the heart, the brain, the voice of greater London, the potent voice which has only to say : “ Do this thing ! ” and lo ! the thing is done.

## CHAPTER XLII

### CONCLUSION

I am taken Ill—At St. Bartholomew's Hospital—A Visit from John Hollinghead—At Brighton—La Duse—Visions of past Glories—Richard II.—A last Visit to Drury Lane—A Memory of Ipswich.

THAT no element of romance may be wanting to this narrative, I may mention a circumstance which occurred during its actual compilation.

The MS. was due, according to arrangement, on September 10th [1903]. Concurrently with this, I had contracted to send a play to America and to complete the libretto of an opera, and was unable to make delivery of all. I had been working beyond my strength, and had resolved to call upon my friend Hutchinson, to obtain an extension of time.

Just as I left my house for the City, Mr. Tree had been kind enough to wire me an invitation to the *première* of *Richard II.* The play is still an abiding joy with me, and I resolved to go and enjoy myself after my wont. When, however, I got into the bus, it began, or rather I fancied it began, to roll about like a water-logged barque at sea.

By the time we got near to Paternoster Row, I was seized with vertigo, stomachic derangement, and all the premonitory symptoms of sea-sickness. When I alighted,

the dizziness increased to such an extent that I could scarcely see a foot before me, my legs began to fail, and I brought myself to anchor against the palisades of St. Paul's, where a sympathetic policeman found me quite helpless, hailed a cab, and deposited me at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where I collapsed into insensibility. When I recovered consciousness, my friends were around me. Upon consultation with the doctors it was deemed best for me to remain in hospital for a few days. I had never been in one before, and my first night was passed in strange dreams, or perhaps delirium.

It will be remembered that I was bent on seeing Tree's Richard that night. A few days before I had unearthed a scenario which I had prepared some years ago for Tom Taylor to clothe in flesh and blood. The subject was Wat Tyler. The *dénouement* occurs in Smithfield Market, where he met Richard II. to discuss the grievances of the Commons, and where, while engaged in the discussion, the people's leader was foully murdered by Walworth (Lord Mayor of the period), whose bloody deed is still endorsed on the civic shield, which remains proudly emblazoned to this day with the assassin's dagger. Our play was to have ended with the hero's death, and the historic words of Richard, "Follow me, men, I'll be your leader!"

While I was lying there within a stone's throw of the spot where the hapless Tyler was murdered, Richard himself was being done to death in the Haymarket, and I could not be there to see it. How provoking!

I believe I was loudly expressing my disappointment,



when my dear old comrade, John Hollingshead, was shown in, with a copy of *Lloyd's* Sunday paper, containing a sensational account of my seizure at St. Paul's. Of course the story lost nothing in telling, and Hollingshead, knowing my loneliness and occasional fits of depression, was much alarmed.

He was anxious to know what he could do to allay my anxiety, and proposed then and there to see Tree and arrange with him for me to have a benefit at His Majesty's. Although in a state of great debility and nervous prostration, this generous sympathy stirred me up and did me a power of good. After a few days, I was ordered off to Brighton for sea air, rest, and recuperation.

Here I digress to say I have no words which can adequately express my thanks to every one connected with that beneficent institution—St. Bartholomew's. It appears to me as if I owe what remains to me of life to their gracious and unceasing solicitude.

A gruesome welcome awaited me at Brighton. Twenty years before I produced Robert Buchanan's play, *The Shadow of the Sword*, then under the management of Mrs. Chart. My dear old friend is dead. The author, too, is dead. The only member of the original cast who survived, save myself, was Mr. Walter Lyte, and—evil omen—that very morning he died too—died in the very train which brought me down from town. After all, "If it be now, 'tis not to come," and "The readiness is all."

On my arrival, two charming young women took charge of me, and with the aid of the kindest of land-

ladies and the most skilful of doctors, petted, spoiled, and coddled me up till I may fairly say "Richard is himself again"; and instead of leaving this narrative unfinished, has survived to give the finishing touch to what will doubtless prove his last dying speech and confession.

When one plays the game of looking back on the past, it is not highly inspiring; but it is the only game a weak, solitary man can play; and here I sit in my lonely study, with all the cards in my hand, so let me shuffle them.

It will be remembered I was on my way to see *Richard II.* when I was stricken down and taken to the hospital.

On my return from Brighton, like a giant refreshed and invigorated by the sea breezes, Tree was kind enough to renew his invitation, which, of course, I promptly accepted. Now a slight difficulty occurred on the day I was due at His Majesty's.

Signora Duse's last appearance happened to be announced for a *matinée* on that very day, and a charming lady of my acquaintance begged me to take her to see the great Italian in *La Dame aux Camellias*. I never could say no to lovely woman, so off we went to the Adelphi.

Judge of our mortification to find on our arrival a seething mob streaming in and out of the vestibule, demanding their money back, and invoking curses, not loud but deep, on the distinguished foreigner who had disappointed them of their *Dame aux Camellias*.



*Photo by Alfred Ellis & Walery, 51, Baker Street, W.*

JOHN COLEMAN.



"We can't get Duse, and it's too early for dinner."

In this emergency a happy thought occurred to me. Desirous of mollifying my fair friend, I proposed to adjourn to the Vaudeville for *Quality Street*. Alas! we are too late there: not a seat to be had for love or money.

"I don't believe it! Whoever heard of a theatre being crowded after a piece has had a twelve months' run!" exclaims the indignant Kitty.

"My dear child, don't talk nonsense!" I reply. "Before you were born, at this very theatre, *Two Roses* was acted a whole season, and *Our Boys* was acted the whole of the next season, and the next, and the next after that—in all, for three consecutive years; and now! Oh! it's too awful to contemplate! Save Irving and Farren and Tom Thorne, they are all gone—authors, actors, and actresses!"

"You are perfectly horrid conjuring up ghosts by daylight like this! Call a hansom, and pack me off home!"

I walk on and soon reach Oxford Street and the Princess's which has been suggested for *Pericles*.

My lady drives off with a parting admonition, "Mind, John, we shall expect you to dinner at seven sharp, and then hey! for His Majesty's and *Richard*!"

"Let me see, three o'clock, and *Richard* doesn't begin till a quarter past eight. Five hours and a quarter! How shall I get over the time? Happy thought! I'll look over the old hunting-ground: who knows what may crop up?"

By this time I had strolled up Bedford Street, through

Covent Garden Market, and turned out exactly opposite Evans's, where, year after year, I used to have my suite of rooms when I came up to Town, till dear old Paddy and his charming daughter shuffled off this mortal coil, when I moved on to the Tavistock. In the large back dining-room I invoked the *first* meeting of the Managers' Association.

Let me recall those good friends and honest fellows, my lost comrades ; here they are : Knowles and Egan of Manchester, Copeland and Alexander Henderson of Liverpool, Mercer Simpson of Birmingham, James Chute of Bristol, Newcombe of Plymouth.

On inquiring at the stage door, I am informed that the theatre is about to be converted into a music-hall by an enterprising American, who proposes to run it with what he calls an "all-round show," commencing at twelve in the morning and terminating at twelve at night !

Everything, I am assured, is settled, signed, and duly delivered, syndicate formed, capital subscribed ; so good-bye to all prospect of poor *Pericles* at the Princess's.

Then I grope my way in semi-darkness till I find myself alone on the gloomy and deserted stage—the stage which I have seen irradiated with the light of the genius of Macready, Edwin Forrest, Charlotte Cushman, Charles Kean, Ellen Tree, the Keeleys, and their glorious galaxy of lovely girls ; where I have seen the Vezins, George Vinery, Stella Colas, Dion Boucicault, and the Colleen Bawn, Fechter, Edwin Booth, Irving, Warner, and Wilson Barrett.

The theatre in which I saw all Kean's glorious revivals, the one of which I retain the most vivid recollection,

was a morning performance (we did not call it *matinée* then), *The Winter's Tale*, on the day of the peace rejoicings at the termination of the Crimean War : nothing like it has been seen before or since.

“But how about Mary Anderson and the Lyceum, my good sir?”

Charming, delightful, and a peerless Perdita ; while as for the production, you might as well compare an anecdote to an epic ; and—did I say that the fair Mary was peerless? I was wrong there. She was lovable, beautiful, delightful, all that could be desired. But so was Caroline Heath before her ; while as for Florizel ! Oh, Carlotta ! And at that time these were in the flower of youthful beauty—the most dazzling revelation of perfect symmetry of mould that ever dawned upon the eyes of man. Then Kean in the mad furor of jealousy ; Ellen Kean in the statue scene ; Harley as the sly rogue Autolycus ; the Saturnalia at the sheep-shearing ; the descent of night and the ascent of Phœbus in the change of the sun,—all these were things once seen ever after to be remembered.

But they have all vanished into the expanse, save Mamillius, who from a bonnie little boy has grown into a gorgeously beautiful woman, who seems to have acquired the secret of perpetual youth and everlasting beauty.

A moment ago I was freezing, now I am stifling in air ! After passing through these ages, when I emerge into Oxford Street it is barely four o'clock, and dinner is not till seven ! I shall have plenty of time to stroll on to the Lane, and get a box for the new Milo farce

(whatever that may mean) on Monday, and take it as a peace offering.

I turn into Soho Square, and find myself in Long Acre, atop of Bow Street, with my back to that "Catacomb of the British drama," as friend John Hollingshead was wont to describe the theatre in which I was so indiscreet as to wreck my fortunes in vainly endeavouring to exploit the "distinguished foreigners" who bolted and left me in the lurch.

This unfortunate building, too, has fallen from its high estate! It is something, I know not what—I only know it is not a theatre—wish it never had been one as I saw it!

Pshaw! Let me push on down Bow Street! Here to the right stands Covent Garden, where as a boy I shook hands with the Liberator—the building sacred to the memory of Gautier and Marco, Tamberlik, Lablache, Tutycus, Alboni, Costa, Frederick Gye, and Mapleson—the building which I saw on the morning after the fatal night when Anderson the conjuror gave that ill-omened masked ball in a heap of blazing ruins.

Here I am at the Lane at last!

While I am waiting for my box I am a boy again, spouting before the great Mac. I see, I hear the divine Helen, my incomparable Rosalind (the last time I ever had speech with her was in this very vestibule); the stately Mrs. Warner, Mac himself, Phelps, Anderson, Ryder, and all their glorious following!

Then comes disorganisation and disintegration and the renowned E. T. Smith—by no means "a glass of fashion and a mould of form," but a right down good



fellow notwithstanding—a fellow, moreover, who got me £200 in my extremity ; my earliest friend, poor Gus Brooke, who lies full fathoms five beneath the glassy deep sea ; my old comrade Terry O'Rourke (Palmer), and Chatterton, fourteen years manager ; Charles Dillon and dear old "Gussy," who commenced his campaign with £4, and left with £50,000 at the bank, and who died beloved, lamented ; and, lo ! bringing me back with a rush from dreamland to *terra firma*, here is his trusty lieutenant and mine, the astute Arthur, director-general of Drury Lane Limited, and, like the Thane of Cawdor, "a prosperous gentleman" : and, by Jove ! what a beautiful theatre he has made of the old funereal pile !

But it is time to be moving to Portland Place, so one last look round the Strand, and then, hey ! for dinner !

Another shock ! The Lyceum deserted, abandoned, and about to be transmogrified into another music-hall ! Another ! As if there were not enough already !

Thirty years ago, within a stone's throw of this very spot, a dismantled, discredited music-hall was converted into a fashionable theatre. And thereby hangs a tale.

Having for the first time in his life acquired a capital of £200, John Hollingshead took the theatre, managed it with great success for thirty years, made a fortune and lost it.

"Anyhow," said John, "I inaugurated the new *régime*, produced every novelty worth producing, kept my company together year after year without a week's vacation, and when I 'dried up' didn't owe a week's

salary to any one. Besides which, it is my boast I found the place a music-hall and left it a theatre ! ”

“ True, O king !—true as gospel ! I saw thy opening night and saw everything thou didst. Yes, I saw thy first night at the Gaiety and thy last !

“ But that is no cure for the toothache ” ; and is it not deplorable to think that whereas thirty years ago a second-rate music-hall was converted into a first-class theatre, now a first-class theatre of London is about to be converted into a music-hall ?

But a plague on moralising ! and so, ho ! for a cab, and hey ! for Cavendish Mansions !—that is, if I am to see *Richard II.* to-night.

I had a hospitable welcome, and I dined, and hey presto ! for *Richard* !

And here let me say, with a vivid recollection of Kean's erudite and splendid production of Benson's excellent work at the Lyceum, the present revival of *Richard II.* is the most superb I have ever witnessed or am ever likely to witness !

At the end of the play I went round to offer Tree my congratulations.

“ Magnificent ! ” I exclaimed. “ Richard, however, is a worm, dear boy ! he is an invertebrate caterpillar, which you have galvanised into—a man ! You have invested the trial scene with a dignity and an interest it really does not possess. Your ‘ business ’ is as original as it is touching and pathetic, and beguiled me of a delicious tear or two.”

I don't think the Shakespearian manager appreciated this iconoclastic compliment in the spirit in which it was

conceived ; at any rate he didn't 'rush' at it, but contented himself by remarking, "There's some one in the green-room you'll be glad to see."

The "some one" I see sitting there gazing into vacancy takes me back at a glance to forty years ago at Ipswich ! Then a sprightly, vivacious little fellow, full of fun and youth and animation ; now, alas ! but the shadow of his former self, drifting into second "childishness and mere oblivion."

Is it not a weird and extraordinary coincidence that, though stricken down on my way here the first night, it appears to have been preordained that on my recovery I should be brought here to witness the deplorable spectacle of the eclipse of the brilliant career of the incomparable comedian whom, forty years ago, I actually brought on the stage ?

The simulated woes of Richard touch me not half so deeply as those of my old friend and comrade reduced to this pass.

At sight of me the wan face relaxes its rigidity, the restless eyes light up to recognition, in a hoarse whisper he gasps, "Ipswich !"

His head sinks on my shoulder—I clasp him to my heart ; then tears drown his utterance and mine—and then—

"The rest is silence."

## *VALEDICTION*

I HOPE it will not be thought that I have ever presumed for one moment to detract from the skill or the enterprise of my brother managers, or the artistic ability of my brother actors of to-day.

“Good wine needs no bush” ; hence the magnificent spectacles of Irving, Barrett, Tree, and Collins are tangible testimonials to their remarkable administrative powers, while the thoughtful and admirable productions of Wyndham, of Hare, of Bouchier, and Frohman speak for themselves and need no eulogy at my hands.

There is, however, no disguising the fact that, despite certain rare and splendid exceptions, from circumstances beyond their control—circumstances which, since I, more than any man, contributed to bring about, I now most deeply deplore—the students of to-day are debarred the experience which is absolutely essential to the making of actors.

There are, however, “as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it” if we know where to find them, and if we can only induce the House of Commons to found and endow a National Theatre, a race of great actors will assuredly arise not only capable of illustrating the

modern ideas of great modern dramatists, but the great works of our greatest masters.

The canon which Pope applied to the art of criticism may with equal fidelity be applied to histrionic art.

True ease in acting comes by skill, and not by chance,  
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

But how is this "ease" to be acquired? The answer is, "By work—work, and yet again by work in the best schools."

But where are the best schools to be found? Echo answers, "Where?"

The paper has just announced the withdrawal, "at two days' notice," of an excellent play (which, though admirably acted, has failed to attract), and proceeds to state that there will be a closure of a month or six weeks for the rehearsals of a new play. Formerly, the theatre would not have been closed for a single night, inasmuch as another play from the repertory would have been immediately substituted for the failure.

The dramatic season proper at Drury Lane, which up to the termination of the Chatterton *régime* extended over nine months of infinite variety, is now reduced to twelve weeks, devoted entirely to one drama, for which the actors have to give a month's or six weeks' rehearsals.

In other theatres of high standing, actors are engaged, not even for the season of twelve weeks, but for the "run," which may last, it is true, for six months, but on the other hand it may last only for six nights, terminable at a moment's notice. This system (apart from its disastrous financial results to the hapless actor!) is fatal

to his artistic development, and precludes the possibility of practice, and consequently of improvement.

Some of our best theatres, notably Wyndham's, the Haymarket, St. James's, Criterion, Vaudeville, and Garrick, are devoted to comedy-drama by our best authors, adequately, and in many cases admirably, presented; some to farcical comedy, which, in the majority of instances, means the rattling, roaring, one-act farce of our fathers frittered out into three feeble ones. Ultra-sensational drama, sumptuously mounted, still attracts at Drury Lane, while elsewhere stupid, extravagant, tiresome absurdities yclept "musical comedies" have a large following.

"Little things please little minds," and these inanities serve to beguile an idle hour and possibly to mercifully provide gentlemen who have dined "not wisely but too well" with an aid to digestion in the shape of "forty winks."

Tree (whose noble productions of *Cæsar*—equal if not superior to the Meiningen rendition—*John*, *A Midsummer Night*, *Twelfth Night*, *Herod*, and above all *Richard II.*, may challenge comparison with any contemporaneous work at home or abroad) is at this moment the only representative of the highest art in the metropolis. Admitted, that we occasionally obtain glimpses of something higher, nobler than the fleeting follies of the hour; but the lamentable fact remains that instead of advancing with the onward tide of time we have positively retrograded in the cultivation of the actor's art.

Forty years ago, when the metropolis was less than

half its present population, when there were no underground railways, no penny "buses" (the lowest fare was sixpence), no trams, no "tuppenny tubes," or electric traction to put the playgoer down at the door of the theatre, for nearly two decades one half of London flocked to Oxford Street to see Charles Kean's superb Shakespearian productions at the Princess's, while the other half made its way to remote Islington to witness the triumphs of Phelps in the Shakespearian drama at Sadler's Wells.

It may be urged *per contra* that a number of new (some of them beautiful) theatres have arisen in the suburbs. Granted (they are all steps in the right direction) ; but though a day school, or even a dozen, may serve to teach children their chap-books, they are not adequate substitutes for a University.

This fact remains to be faced, if the drama (not the mere dry-as-dust residuum of Wardour Street, but the best drama of ancient and modern masters, the drama which is already or may ultimately become assimilated with our national literature) is to be preserved ; nay, more (since a large section of the actors of to-day are "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" to cup and saucer, coat and trouser made plays, and debarred the opportunity for acquiring a practical knowledge of nobler things), if the art of acting itself, in its highest form, is to be preserved from utter extinction, it is absolutely necessary that a National Theatre, endowed and conducted on the basis of the Théâtre Français, should be erected in Central London.

When they have recovered their breath from the

audacity of this suggestion, doubtless certain shining lights will exclaim, "Confound your national playhouse and your national literature and all such 'Tommy rot' ! All we want are frills and flounces and tights and Tom Fool's baubles ! Plague take it ! 'Because thou art virtuous shall there be no more cakes and ale?'"

We shall respond with honest Festa, "Yea, by St. Anne ! And ginger shall be hot i' th' mouth too." And better still, our National Theatre shall be alive with—

Mirth, which wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter, holding both her sides !

But mark ! Our laughter shall be innocent, and honest, and those who laugh once will want to laugh again ; they'll take the ring of it home with 'em, and they'll bring mother and the girls to hear the music the next time.

This project is so near and dear to my heart, and I feel so deeply that it is the bounden duty of every man before he passes into the infinite to do his little utmost to leave the world somewhat better than he found it, that I am emboldened to utter this

#### PARTING ADMONITION.

It is a perpetually standing reproach to the culture of this country that we still remain obtuse and blind to the genius of the mighty master who has done so much to make us what we are. It was reserved for the munificence of an alien and a scion of a persecuted but illustrious race to erect in our midst, and to bequeath



for all time to the citizens of London, the only public memorial which exists of our national poet, but to our eternal disgrace we are still without a theatre on the banks of the Thames dedicated to his memory, while our friends on the other side the silver streak have their magnificent National Theatre in the very heart of Paris—nor they alone, inasmuch as there is not a metropolis in Europe, scarcely a town of importance, that has not a theatre endowed by the State or the municipality!

Could I succeed in laying even one brick of an edifice destined to hand down, not only the great traditions of the art I love, but to conserve to future generations of that greater England which is assuredly germinating in the womb of time the noble accomplishment of; speaking, at its highest standard of purity and excellence, the language which our great master spoke, which Milton wrote, the language which “in the coming on of time” is destined to be *the language of the world*, I would gladly cry :

“Now, O Lord, let Thy servant depart in peace !”

JOHN COLEMAN.



## POSTSCRIPT

**I**T was evident to Mr. John Coleman's personal friends that the illness described in his concluding chapter, had left him a changed man. Although to some extent he resumed his former habits, the infirmities of old age were stealing rapidly upon him. But he was still able to visit his acquaintances. On March 31st he left London, for what proved to be the last time, to spend a few days with some old friends at Buckhurst Hill, Essex, and there he was seized with paralysis. He lingered on until Thursday, April 21st, when he passed away, tended to the last by his kind host and hostess. He was buried at Brookwood, beside his wife, on the Tuesday following, April 26th.

The present work was in the Press at the time of Mr. Coleman's death, and, except the last few sheets, which have been seen through the Press by other hands, the work received the author's corrections.

*April 29th, 1904.*



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